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Number 40

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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Jeffrey Burke Satinover

Poland: Reflections On a New World
Richard John Neuhaus

The Liberalism that We Need
Maciej Zieba

Christians and Postmoderns
J. Bottum

Bill Clinton in Process
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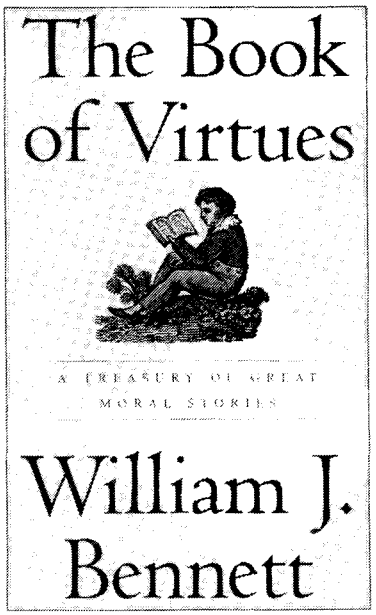

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

FEBRUARY 1994 • NUMBER 40

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On the Moral Sense

As one who usually finds Gilbert Meilaender's contributions to First Things interesting, insightful, and provocative, I am quite surprised by his negative review of James Q. Wilson's *The Moral Sense* (November 1993). To my lights, Wilson's book is one of the best works of nonfiction in recent memory and may very well go down as a classic of moral philosophy.

Professor Meilaender believes that Wilson is something of a confused relativist whose view of the moral life is not that different from the understanding of Richard Rorty. However, the brilliance (or, I should say, one aspect of the brilliance) of *The Moral Sense* that Professor Meilaender misses is the way in which Wilson maintains an objective view of morality that answers the tired relativist cliché which Joseph Adelson writing in *Commentary* calls "Bongo-Bongo-ism"—"How can you call that aspect of morality universal if the (mythical) Bongo-Bongo tribe doesn't practice it?"

Instead of maintaining that moral rules are necessarily universal, Wilson contends that moral dispositions are. In translating moral dispositions into moral rules, the Bongo-Bongos may make a mistake somewhere along the way. As Wilson writes, "It would be astonishing if many of the rules by which men lived were everywhere the same, since almost all rules reflect the indeterminate intersection of sentiment and circumstance." It is the universality of moral dispositions that gives us hope; because radical differences in moral outlook are not inherent, people may eventually bring their moral rules and moral behavior in line with their moral dispositions.

The genius of *The Moral Sense* is the way in which the universal dispositions—sympathy, fairness, self-control, and duty are developed and proved. Wilson collects an astonishing array of psychological and sociological studies relating to nearly every facet of the moral life from every conceivable quarter and synthesizes them to support the general ideas that he posits. This is so in every chapter; through his remarkable conceptual abilities combined with rigorous and eclectic research, Wilson is able to explore paradigms and make connections that no one has made before.

Examples of this are too numerous to state here; the only thing to do is read the book. And no one who does will be disappointed. *The Moral Sense* is what Adam Smith would have written instead of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* if he was as good a social scientist as James Q. Wilson.

Mark Gerson
Williamstown, MA

Caring for Burdens

On his deathbed Samuel Johnson thanked a friend who adjusted a pillow for him, saying, "That will do all that a pillow can do." Nancy L. Harvey ("Wishing People Dead," November 1993) makes the valuable point that food and water will do for a comatose patient all they can do for any of us. Indeed they will, and the fact that food and water will not restore higher mental functions must not be offered as a reason for withholding food and water from the comatose.

Eugene McGovern
Ossining, NY

Regarding Nancy L. Harvey's "Wishing People Dead," the absence of a fuller discussion of Ms. Busalacchi's family, her vital statistics, and medical history allow Ms. Harvey to subtly convey an "evil" impression of the entire experience and of all those involved, especially Fr. O'Rourke, thus setting the stage for her own heroic defense of the innocent. It's a fine device, but hardly serves the cause of serious debate on these terribly difficult matters.

I'm fearful of people like Ms. Harvey, who often, I believe, lose sight of the real people involved and their suffering, willing to allow their suffering for the sake of "principled" argument, thus missing the observation of Jesus: the Sabbath was made

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for humankind, not the other way around. . . .

It is a moral failure of the worst kind to avoid the necessity of decision-making by hiding behind a "universal" principle applied willy-nilly to everyone. Life does not yield to such universal codes, and the fatal attraction drawing Ms. Harvey into the fray is the desire for some legal decision in some court, or a theological discovery in someone's heart, that will once and for all resolve every such case and eliminate all ambiguity.

Ms. Harvey does raise important questions about those in a PVS, but I suspect that such questions ultimately can be answered only by the patient's family in a context of care and support provided by the medical and religious communities in a counterbalancing role for one another, thus preventing hasty or self-serving decisions.

I was particularly concerned by the end of her article, detecting there a somewhat naive reading of history, marked by a romanticized perspective wherein the past is always more glorious and more noble than the present.

In reality, people in modern Western nations are cared for on a scale impossible to imagine for anyone in the Middle Ages, and while that world was populated with the damaged and disfigured, as is many a Third World city today, it's foolish to imagine that they were cared for by noble people willing to "wash everything by hand and spoon-feed them." The suffering of the handicapped in the Middle Ages is hardly a norm by which to judge our current struggles. The handicapped and mentally impaired were often tortured and treated as demons. . . .

I doubt if Ms. Harvey, or anyone else for that matter, would want to return to a city of the thirteenth or fourteenth century in hopes of finding a more humane treatment of the physically needy; and citing the Church's support for the "noble" care-giver is hardly helpful, because the church of the Middle Ages was rife with a twisted theology that found ego-gratifying glory in all kinds of suffering. . . .

I am not suggesting that the decision to end Ms. Busalacchi's life was the right one, but I am suggesting that Ms. Harvey's argument is flawed and, as such, contributes to the pile of emotion-laden rhetoric clogging the channels of genuine moral and theological debate.

(The Rev.) Thomas P. Eggebeen
St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
Livonia, MI

Nancy L. Harvey replies:

The points of my article are simple. Is it right to allow people to get rid of those who burden them? Is this Christian teaching, supported by the traditions and practices of the Church throughout history? Is this a sound principle for our society?

Pastor Eggebeen does not address these points. Instead, he is concerned with the "real people involved and their suffering" and considers it a terrible moral failure to hide behind a "'universal' principle applied . . . to everyone."

This is, however, a different issue. One thing is certain—whatever ethical decisions we make will involve suffering, because we live in a fallen world. Christine Busalacchi had caretakers who grieved for her, as surely as did the members of her family. I believe I am correct that the Church has taught that suffering can be embraced and used to make one more like Christ, quite apart from inhumane practices of the middle and other ages.

How, then, do we decide whose suffering is most important? How can we avoid favoring the healthy over the sick, the articulate over the mute, the educated over the ignorant? Scripture shows God championing the "least of these." He does not praise the strong over the weak, the powerful over the lowly, the hungry over the well-fed. The language is all the other way. But if we do not apply this (or any other) "universal principle," how do we avoid making our decisions based on our emotions, our desires, or whatever principles are temporarily in fashion? And without universal principles, how can we even define, much less strive for, justice, righteousness, and mercy where it counts—in the lives of the "real people involved"?

Roman Follies?

In among the many insightful articles, one has grown used to what might be called First Things' "Roman Follies." A recent case is Richard John Neuhaus' commentary on "Population and Hope for the Future" (November 1993). He notes with approval that an unnamed Vatican document "states once again the irrefutable truth . . . often denied by the population controllers, that reduced population growth is tied to social development."

Those of us who hold that the Roman Church's position on artificial birth control lacks scriptural or historical warrant as Christian doctrine have no need or desire to deny the correlation between birthrate and poverty. It should not be necessary to remind our Editor-in-Chief, however, that correlation does not decide causation. A persuasive explanation of the correlation is that, in much of the world, an excessive birthrate is a key *cause* of poverty.

The strains on pension and medical care that Neuhaus invokes as the "big problem" of declining birthrates in the West arise primarily from the success, and cost, of medical technology in prolonging physical life. Is Neuhaus or the Vatican seriously suggesting that we can procreate our way out of the ethical dilemmas of such technology with a sort of reproductive Reaganomics?

Well, you see why I call them follies. If only they were the folly that preoccupied the first Roman Christians (1 Corinthians 1:23)!

Ian H. Hutchinson
Belmont, MA

The Real Burke

In his review of Conor Cruise O'Brien's fascinating thematic work on Edmund Burke (*The Great Melody*, November 1993) Mark Henrie regrettably chose to focus on an allegation that the liberal O'Brien tried his darndest and failed to make Burke out to be a liberal when he was actually a traditionalist conservative. I wonder how valuable such intellectual games really are. Liberals and conservatives may often resemble one

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another, as for example in the case of Alexis de Tocqueville. It also matters very much whether the liberalism in question is part of an aristocratic tradition of opposition to centralizing monarchy. Thus eighteenth-century Polish nobles could be viewed as liberal while the supposedly liberal Voltaire can be faulted for having congratulated Catherine the Great on her invasion of Poland to put down anarchy and insure religious freedom!

Henrie would have done better to have focused on the inner dilemma of Burke having to support an English and Irish establishment that was driving the Irish Catholics into Jacobinism much against their nature, something the sensitive Burke appreciated and sympathized with as he also deplored it. O'Brien's book is obviously often more suggestive than conclusive. His discussion of the battle inside Burke's soul between the Catholic believer and the Anglican conformist is most impressive, if necessarily undocumented. He presents a much more believable Burke than Isaac Kramnick's Marxo-psychological Burke torn between bourgeois and aristocratic passions and resentments. This would have made a better subject for Henrie's book review.

Norman Ravitch
Riverside, CA

Evangelicals and Catholics

In his November 1993 Public Square, Richard John Neuhaus points out that a great deal of attention is being given to the growth of sects and evangelicals in Latin America. But as Jan Harris pointed out in *Christianity Today* (April 5, 1993), "One of the biggest beneficiaries of Protestant evangelistic activity in Latin America is the Catholic Church itself."

Harris quotes a poll taken after a 1992 evangelistic campaign in Costa Rica, for example, which showed that 80 percent of the 5,000 people who said they changed religions as a result of the campaign were back in the Catholic Church within five months.

Christianity Today also points out that there are far fewer evangelicals than estimated: 8.9 percent in Costa Rica, not the estimated 24 percent; 19.3 percent in Guatemala, instead of twice that many.

Dan Lyons
Bloomsbury, NJ

Reasons for Decline

"No Other Gods" (November 1993) by Robert L. Wilken offers very insightful perspective on why contemporary Western Christianity is in decline. His use of the writings of T. S. Eliot and Origen demonstrates that the issues which confront the Christian faith are not new. In fact, I'm convinced that the struggles we face both within and without the Church are the same that the ancient nation of Israel experienced and that in particular have confronted the Church since the time of the Apostles. The problem is the institutionalization of the body of Christ.

Contemporary discussions about the decline of Mainstream Protestantism have used the tools of scientific analysis to chart the demographic landscape of the church. We can know who is leaving, why they are leaving, and where they are going. But underlying these shifts is an issue we have not faced. What if the form of Christianity institutionalized in Western Protestantism is time- and culture-specific, and that its usefulness to the Gospel is running out? Criticism of such a question often assumes that there is a close enough congruence between the body of Christ and denominations to make such a discussion irrelevant. I believe we make that assumption at our peril. . . .

Eliot is correct that a "new Christian culture" is our only alternative to a secular one. And yes, it will have to have some institutional form. But that form must be driven by the fellowship that Christians have with God in Christ through the Spirit. A hope for the future based on reordering institutional structures ignores the realities of change that have swept our world. We must think more broadly, more humbly, and more sensitively so that we might know where the Spirit moves us. Even in the midst of decline, the evidence of God's continued action for the Church surrounds us. Let's not take for granted the hopeful signs, but see these signs pointing us to our future.

Edwin R. Brenegar III
Elkins, WV

Professor Robert L. Wilken's "No Other Gods" struck me as eminently sensible, as I had expected. Ours certainly would be a spiritually richer, happier, healthier society if his analysis were adopted by Americans generally. The problem is that the idol in need of replacement is very dear to Americans.

The central campus of the University of Virginia, where I am Prof. Wilken's student, is laid out around a central Rotunda, which is itself supposed to be a temple to education generally (that is, to human wisdom). Thomas Jefferson, the Lawn's architect, intended it to be the embodiment of his own Enlightenment faith in man's unassisted reason, the opposite of which, to his mind, was "monkish superstition." That is why he replaced worship of God with veneration of man in his design. As Dr. Wilken and I have discussed, the current American spiritual debacle owes its genesis to Jefferson himself.

Jefferson did yeoman's service in separating Christianity from education in Virginia; only his contemporaries' objections kept him from going farther. When Justice Hugo Black wrote Jefferson's metaphor of a "wall of separation between church and state" into federal constitutional law, the writing was on the wall: a full-scale secularization of our national politics, at the command of the courts, was only a matter of time.

If we are to submit to Wilken's prescription, we must first overcome certain prejudices. Foremost among these is our (generally uneducated) national love affair with Thomas Jefferson (than whom no American President has been more hostile to God); of additional importance is our attachment to the "wall of separation between church and state," which is actually a wall between our polity and spiritual health (the consequence of true adherence to the

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First Commandment). In the process of fighting these two errors, we must show our fellow citizens that, as Justice Felix Frankfurter noted long ago, it is often the Supreme Court, not the Constitution, that is speaking in our so-called "constitutional" law.

Kevin R. Gutzman
Charlottesville, VA

Categorizing

Kevin Offner's typology of Evangelicalism referred to in The Public Square (November 1993) did indeed bring momentary cries of protest from this disenfranchised Evangelical. I could not find my label anywhere among his grocery list! But cries of protest quickly turned to chuckles as I realized that I could pigeonhole all of my Evangelical friends into his taxonomy. Furthermore, I have acquaintances that fit into all twelve categories.

I am not surprised that someone in Offner's position could develop such a fine taxonomy. I suspect that an InterVarsity worker at Harvard would have plenty of time on his hands. Unless of course he is a (well, well, here is a thirteenth category) "Evangelistic Evangelical" who is particularly motivated by winning converts. Of course he left that off the list; maybe he knows something I don't.

James E. Nelson
Lincoln, NE

Pet Sacrifices?

I greatly enjoyed the analyses of Supreme Court opinions by lawyers Raul Yanes and Mary Ann Glendon (November 1993). Added to their coverage of the *Lukumi Babalu* case, however, might have been wary speculations as to how the Court may cope with cases where household pets will be the victims of religious practices. That such may confront the judiciary in the foreseeable future is obvious from an Associated Press story of August 9, 1993 from Pensacola, Florida which reads in its entirety:

> Three men accused of killing cats in satanic rituals face animal cruelty charges.
>
> One suspect told investigators that cult members drank cat blood after an animal sacrifice, said police Sergeant Jerry Potts.

So, if these suspects plead *Lukumi* as a defense how will the judiciary—from low to high—respond? And how might it respond to a dog barbecue as a religious festivity?

Park Chamberlain
Woodside, CA

Remembering John Bunce

Below these bluffs, branch water
like a wind in leaves
ruffles the hollow. The rush and spill
sings through bare timber.
Stretched in the sun on this rough rock,
I feel the stir among the hickory buds,
the red tips on the maple, and wonder
who could name these sounds—the flowing over,
the surging around roots and stones.

Up north, a man too young
to limp and stumble, with children
not yet grown, lies in bed
after biopsy, making what terms he can
with a brain tumor. All winter
it kept roaring in his ears
with no interpreter. Now he has one.

Downstream my wife bathes her feet
by a sweetgum tree.

For you, John, heaven might start like this,
from bedrock, when one voice
that fills all hollows
like the voice of many waters
stops singing in an unknown tongue.

Max Sutton

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Opinion

A President in Process

James Nuechterlein

It turns out, in retrospect, to have been a most ironically timed meeting. The White House Communications Office had arranged for nine representatives of the religious press—nicely balanced as to denomination and theological inclination—to meet with the President on December 17. That happened to be the Friday of the weekend on which there emerged, courtesy of David Brock and *The American Spectator*, lurid reports from Arkansas state troopers concerning President Clinton's alleged extracurricular sexual adventures during his time as Governor and President-elect, as well as tales of attempts, through threats or bribery, to ensure the troopers' silence. Those reports, combined with renewed concerns over the Clintons' connections with the Whitewater Development Corporation and with the disappearance of Whitewater and other files from the White House office of Vincent Foster, Jr. after his suicide, created a Yuletide crisis the seriousness of which, at this writing, is still unclear. At the very least, it will make this Christmas past one that will not likely make its way into the President's White House scrapbook.

The members of the press at the meeting, of course, knew nothing of the imminent crisis. But Bill Clinton obviously did, and reflections on the fifty-minute session are inevitably colored by curiosity as to what difference, if any, the President's knowledge made as to his comments and general demeanor. And the scandal itself, to the extent one credits it—and it takes a heroic denial of the plausible to dismiss it altogether—necessarily intrudes on one's judgment of the President.

The subject of the meeting was crime and violence in America, an issue which the White House clearly thought it could turn to its advantage—it was the presidential theme of the week—and which allowed Clinton to highlight his "new Democrat" credentials. He hit all the right neoliberal notes. Government could do something about crime—the Brady bill, police build-ups, boot camps as alternative punishment—but these actions "from the outside in" could only reinforce the more important actions "from the inside out": renewal, especially in inner-city minority neighborhoods, of structures of family and work, structures without which crime and the inextricably connected drug culture flourish. This project of community rebuilding, Clinton emphasized, will require a broad range of initiatives and programs, including presidential leadership, legislative innovation, moral uplift (the President particularly noted Jesse Jackson's anti-crime drive among blacks), and, most important, reconstitution of the "intermediate institutions" of the community—the black church chief among them—whose decay is both symptom and cause of urban pathology.

The format of the meeting was something of a muddle. The President indicated at the outset that he looked forward to an exchange of views, and there was some of that for the first twenty minutes or so, but as the session wore on, the focus shifted increasingly to Clinton. It became clear that most of those present preferred drawing out the President to listening to each other's views on the causes and cures of crime. What began as a discussion wound up as a presidential interview.

The subject matter shifted as well. Crime faded into the background, and religion, especially the significance of religion in the President's life and thought, came to the fore. Some months earlier, Clinton had made a stir by drawing attention to Stephen Carter's *The Culture of Disbelief* and indicating his support for the author's argument that, at least among the nation's secularized elites, adherence to the classic American doctrine of separation of church and state had degenerated into an implausible and ahistorical insistence on separation of religion from public life. The President repeated the point here and underlined his argument that the First Amendment focuses on freedom of (not from) religion by praising Congress for passing the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The conversation turned personal when someone asked Clinton, a Southern Baptist, how he had been influenced by his education at Catholic (Jesuit) Georgetown University. The influence, Clinton replied, had been "profound." He noted three particulars: the Catholic sense of the social mission of the Church, the distinctively Jesuit emphasis on intellectual rigor, and the centrality to Catholic piety of confession. The last point was the most intriguing—the more so in retrospect—and it was one to which Clinton returned repeatedly. His one reticence about speaking of religion in public, he said, was that he might be perceived as sanctimonious or holier-than-thou. But, he said on at least three occasions during the meeting, at the heart of Christian piety is the knowledge that we are all sinners, all in need of forgiveness, all presented with the possibility of starting over again. To speak as a Christian, he reiterated, is to speak as a self-confessed sinner.

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Asked to discuss the effect of his Baptist faith on his life, Clinton spoke first of his youth. He referred to a painful childhood (while he did not specify, the reference to difficulties with his alcoholic stepfather was obvious), in which his faith gave him an essential sense of reassurance and value as a child of God. He recounted that in his twenties and beyond he had drifted away from the church, but had come back to serious religious observance in 1980, an observance, he made clear, that continues to this day. Without making any explicit personal Christian witness, the President indicated the importance of religious belief to his life. How, he wondered toward the end of the meeting, given life's inescapable difficulties and our own frailties, can people get through life without faith?

What does one make of all this, particularly in light of the revelations—if true—that followed the meeting?

One notes, first of all, the feebleness of the White House's later dismissals of the charges brought against the President, and their incompatibility with some of Clinton's expressed views. Both Mrs. Clinton and the President himself said, in effect, that the truth or otherwise of the sexual charges brought against Clinton make no difference in the judgment of his stewardship. All that matters, they suggested, is his public record of achievement; his personal behavior is simply irrelevant to his presidency.

But the President knows better, and he indicated as much in the meeting. He spoke repeatedly of the importance of presidential leadership, including in the realm of values. Adults, he said, teach values to children whether they speak of them or not. The President knows well the power of the bully pulpit, and he can hardly ignore the example his own behavior provides to those in urban neighborhoods whose attachment to family values of commitment and fidelity he recognizes as necessary to his community restoration program.

Beyond that, there is the continuing enigma of the President's personality and character. Visitors to the White House are reminded of his considerable gifts. Fred Barnes of *The New Republic* has said that he has never met anyone whose "getting-along" skills exceed Clinton's, and, upon meeting the President, one is not inclined to disagree. The charm is undeniable. Clinton has a knack for putting people at their ease, and he impresses by not overtly attempting to impress. He speaks modestly, listens carefully when others speak, and engages visitors in genuine conversation. And not even Clinton's worst enemy would deny his intelligence or powers of articulation.

Yet there are disturbing elements in the Clinton persona. His entire adult life, except for a very brief teaching stint, has been politics, and the cultivation of the qualities of self that go with politics. Indeed, his whole life since adolescence has been, as it were, a perpetual race for student body president. Virtually all who recall him, at any stage, remark his drive for popularity. One recalls such types: ever eager, ever ambitious, with a compulsive need to be not just liked but well-liked, friendly to all and intimate with almost none. The appearance of sincerity is all, and the best of them, like Clinton, manage to disarm the suspicion of those around them who are less popular that they lack a genuine center.

It is difficult to tell with Clinton. The sincerity is apparent, but sometimes one suspects a kind of serial sincerity. At any given moment and in whatever company, the President conveys the impression of the authentically sincere, however incompatible with each other particular moments and company might be. The one constant is the desire to ingratiate.

Such an appraisal may seem unfair, but it is difficult otherwise to make sense of much of the President's behavior. His governing ideology is all over the place—now populist, now new Democrat, now standard collectivist liberal. He waxes as enthusiastic about homosexual rights as family values. So also, if in different measure, with his personal life. My guess is that no one sitting in the Cabinet Room on the morning of December 17 doubted the sincerity of the President's expressions of piety, but by the following Monday at least some of us were left wondering how to reconcile such expressions with reports—so far not formally denied—of continuing and wildly irresponsible philandering. After confession, after all, comes repentance, with its accompanying call for amendment of life.

It seems oddly to be the case that in Bill Clinton, now approaching fifty, we have a President still in the making. One comes away from the White House wondering when, if at all, that work in progress might be brought to completion. And to what end.

James Nuechterlein *is Editor of* First Things.

Woodstock Comes to Washington

Gary L. Bauer

If any further proof were needed that the Woodstock generation has taken over the federal government, President Clinton's "AIDS Czar," Kristine Gebbie, gave a speech a few months ago at a conference on teen pregnancy that should put the matter to

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rest. (Her office attempted to rewrite the speech retroactively, but unfortunately for her, an AP reporter got it on tape.)

Now, as we all know, over the past thirty years this nation, and the entire West, have been through something aptly named the "sexual revolution." Centuries-old codes of morals and manners have been overturned. We have become a society drenched in sex and sexual themes. Things are being taught to children today that couldn't have been mentioned in polite society just thirty years ago. That what we have here is the new mainstream is confirmed by the fact that those who are opposed to this development are regularly labeled "extremists" in the media.

In the wake of this revolution, what is Miss Gebbie's reform agenda? That we should stop being such a "repressed, Victorian society."

No joke.

One would like to know what planet she lives on—and whether it is possible to buy a house there. Because on the planet where we all presently live, it is impossible to get through a single hour without encountering some sexual topic in a news story, an ad, a piece of entertainment, or even just a conversation. We have open copulation on prime time television, we have erotic fantasies on a cable channel that millions of children watch, and sexual hydraulics is being taught in school in ways intended precisely at breaking down modesty.

We also have epidemics of abortion, divorce, adultery, desertion, and sexually transmitted diseases. A skyrocketing percentage of our children lack any chance of having a stable, two-parent family, and as a result, are increasingly at risk of abuse and of following a life of crime.

But to Miss Gebbie, the main problem is that our common ethic "misrepresents information, denies sexuality early, denies homosexual sexuality—particularly in teens—and leaves people abandoned with no place to go."

The Gebbies of this world are part of a long, tired story. Since at least the 1920s, the cognoscenti and the beautiful people have been lecturing the common folk about how we are messed up with respect to sex, and how the way out of our troubles is to overcome our "hang-ups" and "prejudices," and join the elites in their newfound liberation.

A *New Yorker* cartoon from the 1920s showed a gawky young man and girl standing awkwardly about, while off to one side, one upper-crust old lady says to another: "They're discussing sex. Isn't that sweet?"

In Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, written in the 1940s and describing the social scene of the twenties, a troubled young student named Sebastian is warned by Oxford University authorities that he must "mend his ways" if he wants to remain in the university. "How does one mend one's ways?" he laments. "I suppose one joins the League of Nations Union, and reads the *Isis* every week, and drinks coffee every morning at the Cadena cafe, and smokes a great pipe and plays hockey and goes out to tea on Boar's Hill and to lectures at Keble, and rides a bicycle with a little tray full of note-books and drinks cocoa in the evening and discusses sex seriously."

Writing in the early forties, C. S. Lewis noted: "[Y]ou and I, for the last twenty years, have been fed all day long on solid lies about sex. We have been told, till one is sick of hearing it, that sexual desire is in the same state as any of our other natural desires and that if only we abandon the silly Victorian idea of hushing it up, everything in the garden will be lovely. . . . They tell you sex has become messed up because it was hushed up. But for the last twenty years it has not been hushed up. It has been chattered about all day long. Yet is still in a mess."

The record is clear: aggressive anti-puritanism on sexual matters has long been integrated into the socially dominant notions of respectability. This is old stuff by now.

It is also ignorant and arrogant. From Margaret Mead to Kristine Gebbie, the ideologues of sexual liberation have talked as if they had personally invented sex.

Miss Gebbie breathlessly informs us—stop the presses!—that sex is "an essential thing to human life" and "a positive thing." Does she think that she and the cultural class she represents are the first to discover this? It has been known and experienced in the lives of countless happily married couples across the millennia, and perhaps nowhere more than in marriages lived under the banner of Christianity, whose Founder pronounced the intimacy of man and wife to be a blessed thing.

The same is true today. Several surveys show that married couples who attend church at least once a week make up the most sexually contented segment of society. And then there are the hundreds of thousands of Christian teenagers who are making personal promises to remain abstinent until marriage. Repressed? Victorian? They're frank about sex, positive about it, and looking forward to it. They just don't want to debase it by using it as a cheaper alternative to seeing a movie, or (for boys) as a way of asserting machismo in the absence of positive male role models, or (for girls) as a desperate ploy to hold on to a boyfriend—or any of the other sad, dead-end abuses of sex that become common whenever a society sheds its "repressed Victorianism."

Finally, Miss Gebbie's agenda is not only ignorant and coarse; it's also totalitarian. "The next generation of young people," she said, "should be prepared to enter an adult sexual life with a better base of attitudes and information than we have provided so far." Note the word "attitudes." Miss Gebbie and her ilk are out to mess with your kids' minds. You

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folks who still think saving sex for faithful and monogamous marriage is a good idea—Miss Gebbie may leave you alone, but she's determined that your children will have "a better base of attitudes."

The saddest part of Miss Gebbie's performance is the part about how our "repressed" attitudes "leave people abandoned with no place to go."

If there is one indictment above all others that could be brought against the sexual revolution of which Miss Gebbie is such a fervent commissar, it is that it is destroying the home, which is the ultimate place for people "to go." What sort of old age are people looking forward to when they contemptuously reject all the opportunities that life affords to form lasting, mutually attentive relationships? Will they find the singles scene as satisfying in their sixties as it was in their twenties? Who is going to share our lonely "places" with us, if we've spent our youth and adulthood overcoming "hang-ups" about monogamy and fidelity? And what will take the place of homecomings and family gatherings in the lives of children whose parents decide that "Victorianism" isn't for them?

It's a cruel, cold, and dictatorial world that stands behind the seemingly liberating views of Kristine Gebbie and her patrons in the White House.

Gary L. Bauer, *now President of the Family Research Council, was domestic policy advisor to President Reagan and Undersecretary of Education under William Bennett.*

A Peculiar Little Test

Philip Zaleski

Every two or three years, at a small, elite New England university, I offer a graduate-level course on "Nature Writing." The students, as you might guess, exhibit a keen interest in birds, blossoms, bugs, and bears. Despite shared tastes, the composition of the class is impressively diverse, a patchwork of amateur entomologists, high school science instructors, budding Thoreaus, Lake Poets manqué. Participants show little mercy towards environmental degradation (strip mining, whale-hunting, and the felling of the rain forest are anathema), but, thankfully, no more than one or two Earth-Firsters—fanatics who applaud Edward Abbey's bitter saying that "I'm a humanist, I'd rather kill a man than a snake"—sign up each year. As our classroom discussions make clear, the students also have in common a keen religious sense, directed, it is true, more towards the awe induced by a streaking meteor or a rutting moose than, say, that of the Resurrection of Christ or the Parinirvana of Buddha. In sum, my students are, by and large, a representative sampling of post-1960s educated America.

In many ways, the highlight of the course is a peculiar little test that I administer about mid-semester, when students' heads are abuzz with the conflicting claims of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Darwin, and Gould: Is the natural order a theophany or the battleground of rabid genes? What is man, that he is mindful of nature? As we all agree afterwards, the quiz tells us something—but we're not sure just what—about how we apprehend the world, ourselves, and (for those students so inclined) the Creator.

The quiz is simple enough. I offer a list of fifteen items (it varies from year to year): mouse, boy, sun, angel, ant, crab, Norwegian pine, corn, amoeba, hamburger, potato, *Moby Dick*, Taj Mahal, Rolls Royce, the idea of the good—and I ask students to rank them, using whatever scale they deem most important. Without fail, one or two refuse to take the test, rejecting the legitimacy of any and all gradations. The rest plunge in. Predictably, there is always one—a tease, perhaps, although suspicion lingers that he means it—who gives the edge to the crab or the Rolls. There's frequently a Platonist who opts for the idea of the good. As a rule, only one person puts the human being at the peak, as crown of creation and *imago Dei*: the teacher (for I participate in the listing, and share my results with the students). Invariably, the great majority put the sun on top.

When I ask why, something remarkable happens. The students understand what I am after with this test, for they never rank by height or mass or population or any other gross physical aspect. No, they do so according to a scale of values. But what values? When pressed, the students allow that they order according to what we must call *being*. And here the strangest part of the test emerges: although I believe that there are right and wrong answers, I cannot imagine giving a grade, for my most fundamental premises are not shared by my students—or, more exactly, are shared in such a strange way that our common ground turns to quicksand, and teaching threatens to become (as it often does when teachers do not respect their students) trench warfare.

We all rank according to the scale of being. This elusive quality I might define as degree of closeness to, or participation in, the Godhead. To my students, however, *being* is something else: that with the most being is that which absorbs lesser beings—to put it bluntly, the dominant muncher in the food chain. The sun, shedding the energy that powers all life

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(that "gives life" to the earth, my students might put it), necessarily dominates the list. But what powers the sun? Here the students stare blankly ahead.

In this little test, I believe, can be discerned the hidden reason for the modern dilemma. On the one hand, it assures us that young people retain an awareness, albeit skewed, of morality and ontology. They respect that which "gives life." In fact, as anyone who spends much time in close proximity to children knows, they make absolute moral judgments all the time based on a lively, if naive, sense of good and evil, but lack the articulated moral structure on which to hang their felt opinions.

On the other hand, something is seriously amiss. Crab over humans? Sun over angels? When parents see packs of kids running the streets like wolves, when unchecked greed threatens a delicate ecosystem, when suicide rates soar, a number of reasons are invoked: loss of family values, lack of respect for the natural order, lack of love. All these are true, yet all can be subsumed under one overwhelming loss that is pinpointed by the quiz. Its exact nature was conveyed to me by an automobile mechanic (he works on Volvos, which says something about his trust in traditional values) who was asked by an elderly friend, "What's wrong with the world today?" His instant answer was, "We've lost the idea of hierarchy."

There it is, clear as cabbages and kings: hierarchy, loss of hierarchy, loss of the idea of hierarchy. *Nota bene*: not sense, but idea. For the sense remains. Most students feel on a gut level that ranking is legitimate; that cabbages and kings are not interchangeable. What they lack is the knowledge of hierarchy that comes from a careful study of tradition. But before pondering how that knowledge might be reawakened, let us see whether ignorance of hierarchy is in truth the black hole at the bottom of the world's woes.

The idea (from the Greek *hieros*, "sacred," and *arche*, "rule" or "origin") achieved full maturity in the sixth-century writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, wherein are expounded the divine principles of order and their manifestation in the celestial and terrestrial spheres. Fourteen centuries later, the modern looking-glass has flip-flopped the meaning of the word: no longer is hierarchy a joyous acclamation that there exist creatures above me and creatures below me, a safety net of being woven by the Creator, preserving me, victim of the first Fall into death of the flesh, from a further fall into the absurdity and consequent death of the spirit. (For where can I rise, where can I fall, into what heaven or hell, in a universe stripped of levels?) Hierarchy is now an intolerable suppression of my freedom and that of my neighbors. Order of the day: paradigms must be toppled, mountains razed.

Thus forty centuries of human enterprise are hammered flat. (Not only the work of the great civilizers but of the great rebels as well. Nietzsche had a keen sense of hierarchy; thus the *übermensch* and Nietzsche's claim, both literal and figurative, to think better in the mountains. The irony is piquant, for Nietzsche's imprimatur is often attached to hierarchy's downfall, this metaphysical coup that ends all coups by abolishing all authority.) One sees the leveling instinct everywhere: in religion, where a proposal was recently floated by disaffected Catholics to elect the Pope through popular vote of all bishops after a vigorous round of whistle-stop campaigns; in the plastic arts, which have expunged iconography and perspective, the two guardians of visual order; in the narrative arts, whenever story is replaced by self-reflective surface gyrations (known politely as "pure style"); in architecture, where massive slabs and boxes crowd the sky, each an expression of height without levels. Above all, one sees it in science. Thus microbiologists foster the "selfish gene," in which human beings are puppets tugged willy-nilly by strands of DNA, while neo-Darwinians reject the image of evolution as a tree with human beings ascending in the topmost branches, substituting instead that of evolution as a bramble void of design. The most prominent modern Darwinist states the case succinctly:

> *A crab is not lower or less complex than a human being in any meaningful way.*
>
> — Stephen Jay Gould

The line of battle couldn't be more clearly drawn. The principle of hierarchy is fundamental to the apprehension that ontological distinctions do exist; that only God is self-sufficient Being; that humans, as creatures, are contingent but made in the "likeness" of God; that noncorporeal intelligences occupy intermediate links in the Great Chain of Being (How curious that angels are now in vogue. Could this be another aspect of our disguised hunger for hierarchy: if you squelch it in one place, it springs up in another?); that animals sing a less meaningful song in the universal chorus, for meaning is inextricably bound up with free will and moral choice. (Some research indicates that animals display a spectrum of acts that ape, so to speak, those of human beings, such as making tools and war. But this observation, if confirmed, would simply refine our understanding of the Great Chain of Being, not redefine it or, as extreme animal rightists would have it, melt it down into post-industrial slag.)

Hierarchy, in fact, defines all traditional religions, including those of Native Americans, popularly lauded for their resistance to caste; witness my students' consternation when, in the process of schematizing a Navajo emergence tale, they uncover that old discarded evolutionary tree, for the Navajo sing of human creation as an ascension through the realm of insects (black world), birds (blue world), mammals (yellow world), into that of men (rainbow world) and

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gods. Hierarchy is part and parcel of perception; we discern, therefore we order, therefore we establish above and below.

What social consequences result from the abolition of levels? First, the collapse of the family: The nuclear unit of father, mother, and child (epitomized for Christians by the Holy Family) is traditionally understood as the earthly reflection of a divine order, a web of relationships cohering through love. One doesn't need St. Paul's dicta in 1 Corinthians 11:3 to know that hierarchy binds the family. One merely needs to discern that by virtue of their different natures, mother and father hold different offices (nurturer and protector, to paint it broadly) in the commonweal. In their respective territories, each is a ruling monarch, with the child as loving subject. These days, by contrast, we practice family democracy—which means, in effect, rule of the child, the tail wagging the dog. When this is not the case, too often we find the single-parent family, a result of abdication by one of the monarchs (usually the king) or refusal by the queen to marry in the first place. In either case, this domestic tragedy often leads, as abdications and revolutions are wont to do, to a tilt toward anarchy.

Next, abortion. At first, "choice" may seem to affirm hierarchy by granting the mother ontological superiority over the fetus. The unborn child is part of the mother's body (it "belongs" to the mother) and thus subordinate. Sometimes the fetus is degraded further, usually on the counsel of well-meaning medical professionals eager to protect the moral sensibilities of their patients, into a lump, albeit a complex and strangely fascinating lump, of unwelcome tissue. Such viewpoints, however, are the fruit of false hierarchies, in which the world, by dint of its fallen nature, necessarily abounds. Here the great religions answer with one voice: all human life is infinitely precious. It should be noted that many pro-choice advocates will reject my terminology, describing the world as a "web" rather than a hierarchy, in which mother and fetus coexist in delicate balance. But in this case, it is difficult to see abortion as other than a tragic exercise of power, in which one party can act and the other cannot. To grasp the wrenching realities that surround abortion, we must attempt to understand—literally, stand under, in a receptive posture—the teachings of tradition. Hierarchical truths, like so much else in the spiritual realm, are available only to those who seek them hierarchically. Faith is the mother of knowledge.

Then, unrestricted sexual indulgence. Why not? Without a hierarchy, who's to judge?

And let's not omit violence, murder, torture. If a human is no more meaningful than a crab and we boil crabs for dinner, why not do the same with humans? A modern riddle: How is a torture room different from a dining room? After all, the knives glitter just as brightly, and the victims are, as naturalist Harry Beston put it, just "separate nations." But lest I appear too Swiftian, let me point out that the animal-human equation is dangerously infectious. Thus, in New York City, whirlpooling teenagers justify their sexual assaults by likening themselves to dogs in heat.

Finally, the decline of the university. The advent of deconstruction (the hermeneutics of suspicion), in which the ordering principle is reduced to the pull and tug of conflicting powers, is the death-knell of culture. Many students today cannot experience, say, Yeats' "Leda and the Swan" as a glory of English poetry; they perceive it only as a vehicle for sexist, Eurocentric imperialism. The real subversion of hierarchy here is the assumption that certain human activities, e.g., the aesthetic, moral, or spiritual, cannot override or subsume other activities, e.g., the political. Thus the proliferation of "Bible as literature" courses, in which the Bible as revelation receives nary a nod.

The lessons are obvious. The cure, alas, is not. Perhaps we need to open a Hierarchy Academy, to which all able-minded young Americans must devote two years of service. Tasks would include listening to elders, reverencing human life, kneeling or bowing before God in all His manifestations. Funding, of course, will not be forthcoming. Well, then, perhaps a national thought experiment might do the trick. Imagine what the world would be like if some of the hierarchies so widely attacked were instantly dismantled: if the visible Church ceased to exist, with its pomp and pageantry, its metaphysical and moral instruction, its international network of charities. Or if the federal government ceased to function. No taxes—but also no Social Security, no military. Even if we grant for a moment that these examples—ecclesia, government—are arthritic exoskeletons, consider the heart of the matter, the interpenetrating triad of faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these, says St. Paul in the greatest of all hierarchical proclamations, is love. What if these three—and above all, love—should vanish?

My thought experiment is rhetorical, but it tells us that our very world is at stake, or at the least—is this so different?—our sacred relationship to the world. What is demanded is nothing less than a volte-face on the part of all who guide and all who follow. We must learn once again, in all humility, how to discern true from false, good from bad, high from low. Pastors must teach their flocks that humans are neither dogs nor gods, but something in between, and that therein lies our promise. Teachers must explain that learning is a ladder, its feet planted in basic skills, its rungs levels of understanding, its top aslant the mount of Wisdom. Parents must make it clear that the egg does not instruct the chicken. This project of moral, aesthetic, social, political, and scientific dimensions is,

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in utter truth, the Final Battle.

Here, then, is another little quiz for my students (one that, while based on New Testament and Hebrew Bible sources, can be taken, if approached in the right spirit, by anyone of any faith):

What do the following three images tell us about human beings, about God, about hierarchy?
(1) A holy temple in a holy city in a holy land.
(2) The faithful gathered around the elders in that temple.
(3) Those temple elders gathered around a twelve-year-old boy.
What does a Volvo mechanic know that the world has forgotten?

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ON THE OTHER HAND

Sorting Us Out

Peter L. Berger

All persons of good will have reason to rejoice over the progress made in recent years in building a society of racial justice in America. More progress may confidently be expected under the present Administration, which has put diversity on the national agenda all the way to the highest levels of government. (In this Administration, there are white public interest lawyers, black public interest lawyers, gay public interest lawyers . . .) Still, as was to be expected, there are problems. Under the leadership of the President, these problems will be faced squarely and tackled in the spirit of principled pragmatism for which he has been justly praised.

Inside reports indicate that, since there had been some confusion in this matter, the Department of Justice, under instructions of the Attorney General—who, if this were England, could look forward to retirement as Lady Janet of Waco—has recently put together an official list of Federally Scheduled Ethnic Entities. (According to Washington gossip, this term was coined by a political appointee who had been a Peace Corps volunteer in India. He had been greatly impressed there by the progress made in combatting the injustices of caste by the Schedule of Castes, Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, who are given preferences in education and government employment. Added up, they now include some 70 percent of the population.)

Those involved in the drafting process insist on two important points. First, they emphasize that in preparing this list the Department is well aware of the fact that it pertains to only one category of victims of injustice. In seeking to facilitate redress for those who have suffered as a result of ethnic or racial discrimination, the Department will not relax its vigilance against all the other forms of oppression—those based on gender, sexual orientation, age, appearance, physical or mental handicap, veteran status, and—oh yes—religion. (Speaking on deep background, a spokesperson clarified the last point by supporting the rights of groups using hallucinogenic substances in worship, though she admitted to some doubts about animal sacrifice.) Second, drafters insist that the proposed list of FSEEs is simply intended to help employers and others to define more clearly the categories of people to be scheduled for inclusion in a properly diversified labor force. These schedules are to be understood as goals, *not* quotas.

A leaked copy of the draft indicates that the list is indeed clear and simple. It consists of African Americans, Latinos/Latinas (a.k.a. Hispanics), Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and People of the Northern Sun (a.k.a. Eskimos). No hyphens, please. All other people are to be designated as whites (lower case).

So far, so good. Still, there may be problems. What if individuals, unhappy with being in lower case, try to sneak in? How is one to catch cheaters? And even with the best intentions of joining the struggle for racial justice, some individuals may have difficulty categorizing themselves. Given the history of past injustices, it may be supposed that any degree of descent from an FSEE would allow a white to move up from lower case. (There is an element of poetic justice here. Remember how octoroons were treated in the Old South?) But what if a Person of the Northern Sun marries an African American? How is the offspring of this union to be properly classified and scheduled?

The matter of possible cheaters is not at all academic. Quite recently, a municipal employee in a New England community was brought up on charges for allegedly having misrepresented his racial status. The man looked very white indeed, but he had declared himself to be black. By way of evidence he produced a faded photograph, allegedly depicting his black grandmother. One can see the problems faced by the disciplinary board. Even if, by the use of whatever methods of forensic technology, the photograph could be definitely determined as depicting an African American woman, and even if the latter's grandmotherly identity could be verified, would this be enough to validate the employee's claim to legally acceptable blackness?

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However, deliberate cheating is not the main problem. By and large, Americans are honest people. They are also amorous in thoughtless disregard of the requirements of legal orderliness and social reform. This is nothing new. (Think again of those ante-bellum octoroons.) It becomes a serious problem in the present phase of the long march toward a society free of racism. If unemployed whites will try to sneak into the quota—pardon, the scheduled goal—for African American municipal employees—and, worse, if Eskimos will insist on marrying and reproducing with, say, Asian Americans (or even, *horribile dictu*, with individuals in lower case), well, something will have to be done.

If there's a will, there's a way. A few years ago South Africa abolished its Population Registration Act, under which every individual had his or her racial status officially determined and recorded. A large body of experts was employed in the administration of this law. Many of these people are now unemployed or, if lucky, employed in positions where their special skills are unused. They would no doubt welcome an invitation to come to the United States and assume jobs in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. Those people can spot a black a mile away. They are also pretty good at spotting Asians. (Some of them, especially those with German surnames coming from what used to be Southwest Africa, also have expertise in detecting Jews. Since Jews will not be considered FSEEs in this country, this particular skill will presumably have to remain unused.) Some training may be necessary for the determination of Hispanic and Pacific Islander identity. This should not be difficult. After all, it's the attitude that counts. As they say in Afrikaans, "What's bred into the bones will come out in the teeth."

Of course, these experts had something else going for them—the Immorality Act, which prohibited sexual relations (in marriage or outside) across the officially defined racial groups. This may be a more difficult idea to put across in the United States. Even though the combined effects of radical feminism and the fear of AIDS have greatly reduced the frequency of sexual intercourse in this country, large numbers of Americans continue to copulate with some enthusiasm and with little regard for the imperatives of social justice. The Administration will have to apply its best brains to the search for further pragmatic solutions.

Anyway, who said that apartheid would be easy?

Peter L. Berger, *a member of the Editorial Board of* First Things, *is Director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University. This is the first in a series of reflections.*

I Will Expose You, God

I will expose you, God, where You hide
behind the great gray universe,
twinking stars like marbles
through the airless air.
I will trace the whorl of your
great thumbprint,
the dust of it, across the darkened sky.
I will call Your bluff,
and blow away the vapor screen
that secrets You beyond our streaming eyes.

I will call *You*, God, call You loudly forth—
summon You, who laid the angels, wingless,
far from Heaven's heights,
and barred the entry to Your kindly Kingdom.

I will dare You—challenge You, elliptic God,
to come and shout Your wordless name.

Come! Cry out Your name, and *ours* . . .
and *mine*—
as fervidly as ecstasy of lightning,
as certainly as thunder on our ears.

Judith D. Dupree

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Psychology and the Abolition of Meaning

Jeffrey Burke Satinover

It is of course a commonplace nowadays to observe that we are living in the era of "psychological man." By this we mean that psychology in one of its various incarnations—psychoanalysis and psychiatry included—has become the primary means whereby we try to understand the meaning and purpose of our existence.

Psychological understandings of the ultimates in human nature are characterized by the fact that rather than making appeal to traditional theological understandings, the psychoanalytic, psychological, and psychiatric endeavors fit themselves as best they can within the *scientific* framework that has slowly emerged in the West over the six or seven centuries since the beginning of the Renaissance. The term "Renaissance" means, of course, rebirth. It is so called because the era was characterized by a rebirth of classicism (which means, in fact, paganism). But the Renaissance could just as easily, from an opposite perspective, have been called, for example, "The Great Death," since it marked the beginning of a great dying off of a particular cultural synthesis—and a particular understanding of man's ultimate nature. This cultural synthesis was based on Judaism and Christianity, and in the previous two-and-one-half millennia it had largely conquered paganism and thus come to dominate much of the civilized world.

Among the set of human accomplishments that emerged from the Renaissance transformation of human thought, science—and the technology that derives from it—is certainly one of the most powerful to which we are heir. In keeping with the Renaissance spirit, and with the apotheosis of that spirit in the Enlightenment, a primary goal of any modern, scientific psychology has been to understand human subjectivity and behavior—including those areas that touch on morals, meaning, purpose, and value, and therefore on human motivation and choice—not in terms of ultimate purpose but in terms of prior causes.

In the domain of psychology or psychoanalysis proper, this search for causes inevitably means the reduction of what appears to be a freely acting or choosing agent—man—to prior, more elementary influences: complexes, structures of the psyche, family influences, earlier experiences, archetypes. In the complementary domain of biological psychiatry, this same reduction is to the organic substrates of these functional subsystems at ever finer levels of detail.

From within this truly analytic framework—analysis consisting of the *lysis* or breaking down of a whole into constituent parts—all areas of seeming autonomy within human experience are illusory, the residue, as it were, of our ignorance of the true causes that lie "beneath" our experience and cause it, and which only for the time being remain obscured.

Unwittingly, and unacknowledged, the scientific study of man thus aims ultimately at his abolition as man—as free agent—and his reconstruction as mechanism.

"No, that's not entirely true," the analytically informed and guided psychotherapist is apt to object. "Yes, we try to explain our patients' behavior in terms of the conflict among various forces: the instincts in conflict with material and social exigency, for example. But each individual arrives at his own unique solution to these conflicts. And, indeed, when he becomes aware of the conflicting forces that influence him, he is better able to make an informed and creative decision."

But upon closer examination, this notion of free—indeed creatively free—choice remaining somewhere outside the scope of analytic reduction is just a com-

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forting illusion. All that has occurred is that the process of analyzing motives at some point stops, and what remains we decide not to examine further. From a therapeutic perspective this makes sense: the surgeon cuts away the diseased tissue and allows the healthy tissue to remain, better functioning after the operation than before.

But the analogy quickly breaks down: the "surgery" of psychotherapy does not consist in the physical elimination of a section of the psyche, it consists of "seeing through" psychic structures, the dissolving of them into their constituent parts, in which state they no longer need be taken seriously. And of course once we believe we've seen through the parts of our selves we don't care for, it's hard not to start seeing through the ones we do care for. Even though at a certain point, pragmatically determined, most of us stop the analytic process, at some level we and our patients know, or at least sense, that our understanding of selfhood, its very integrity, has been unalterably changed and even damaged.

The method itself "sets the ball rolling," as it were, in one inevitable direction: if our choices prior to analysis were only thought to be free, and were, in fact, the result of unconscious conflict (or biochemistry, for that matter), then why should I believe that my current, post-analytic choices are anything more than the result of other as-yet-unanalyzed influences? And indeed, the study, for example, of ego psychology (which came later in psychoanalytic history), of pre-oedipal influences, of individual differences, of family patterning, of intrauterine milieu, of the genetics of mental disorders (and of character itself) all whittle away at whatever remaining area of true choice there might seem to be.

In its very essence the analytic, scientific method is reductive without limit. Applied to man, it is the universal solvent. The alchemists, who first conceived such a thing, of course never found the universal solvent, and were fortunate not to. For they never considered what would happen if ever they laid hands on it: nothing could contain it; it would eat its way through everything, devouring even its creators.

Freud, whatever his flaws, had the courage of his convictions, and so followed the implications of his vision through to their ultimate end. What he found was a universe devoid of meaning; to explain his own mental state he was driven near the end to postulate a "death instinct," a concept no more scientific or measurable than "God" or "purpose" or "meaning," but considerably more grim, and in the end he chose to die by his own hand.

Consider the current debate over homosexuality: once (in the pre-psychoanalytic era), homosexual behavior was considered purely a matter of choice. Then, during the psychoanalytic era, it began to be seen as a rough composite of choice and family influences. Now, at least among mental health professionals, a vaguely emerging consensus points toward a complex mixture of genetic and environmental influences with choice being squeezed out altogether.

To translate into statistical language: as the number of studies increase, and correlation is found with an increasing number of factors extrinsic to "free will," the amount of variance in human sexual behavior that remains unaccounted for by known factors will continue to shrink, and so the amount left over to attribute to choice will by default likewise shrink.

But more importantly, the experience of a line of progress consisting of an ever-smaller proportion of variance left unaccounted for will inevitably suggest—quite plausibly—that with sufficient effort and advances in technique all the remaining variance could be accounted for and nothing of it left to choice. And even if this theoretical end point is never quite achieved, the remaining proportion left unexplained is apt to be so small that we shall dismiss it anyway.

The example of homosexuality is particularly useful in the context of this discussion because the social and political forces arrayed around the question just happen, at this moment, to be constellated in such a way as to make many people *want* to find little or no choice involved in it. The homosexuality debate is thus configuring itself in precisely the reverse way of most debates about the medical bases of human behavior: people usually resist the idea that their behavior is driven by unchangeable, biological factors (consider the feminist arguments). But in the case of homosexuality, many people are today quite open to the idea of a line of research progress that will reduce this particular behavior mostly to prior causes, and even to the end point this line marches toward, that of no choice involved in homosexuality at all.

But, if we think about it carefully, all aspects of human behavior are at least in principle subject to a similar analysis. That is, after all, the end point of all scientific research. From a scientific perspective there is never any room whatever for freely acting agents. At best, a given analysis only leaves us with remaining areas for which we have not (yet) discovered, or are (as yet) incapable of discovering, the true, prior causes. It is in the very nature of science and the scientific method that it cannot at all address or understand free agency. If there is such a thing, it lies entirely outside the domain of scientific analysis, for to the extent that an analysis of the behavior of any agent is successful, to that extent the agent's behavior has been demonstrated no longer to be free, but predetermined.

Freud observed that psychoanalysis was resisted by so many people—including many of his erstwhile followers—because of the wound it inflicts on their self-regard. But we can go even further with this

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keen, if somewhat infuriating, insight (infuriating because, on an ad hominem basis, it implies that the mere fact of an objection to psychoanalysis a priori supports it). All scientific method applied to human behavior gives rise not just to resistance, but to dread and even revulsion, because its end point—even if only sensed inchoately and not faced fully—is appalling: the elimination of the possibility of choice, meaning, and purpose in human existence. For from the scientific perspective, "meaning" and "purpose," like "free will," are but illusions of human subjectivity, ultimately reducible to other, prior causes. While this certainly wounds man's pride, it does more than that: it demonstrates that the object of his deepest longings is utterly illusory, and hence his longings are utterly unfulfillable.

Here we have introduced a new observation, namely, that there is such a thing as a profound common human longing for meaning and purpose. If it is true that, unlike our longings for food, water, nurturance, accomplishment, and romance (to name a few), our longing for meaning and purpose has no attainable object, then it makes perfect sense to label such a longing as neurotic. The repetitive, compulsive pursuit of illusory and therefore unattainable goals is, after all, almost a definition of the term.

The tacit goal, then, of a rigorous psychoanalytic, and hence reductionist, worldview is a unique kind of renunciation. One is, on the one hand, meant to attain a stoic abstemiousness with respect to spirit, while embracing, with all due practicality, the world of matter (practically speaking, the instincts). Anatomy, gross and fine, especially that of the nervous system, indeed becomes destiny.*

Along with the majority of his fellow psychoanalytic adventurers, Freud seems to have assumed that to understand the sources of our neurotic longing for meaning would somehow relieve us of it, in the same way that understanding may relieve us of other, more mundane, neuroses; or that a more creative solution to the problems caused by instinctive conflict would ipso facto translate into a subjective and satisfying, even if ultimately meaningless, *feeling* of meaningfulness. This has not proven true. Either psychoanalytic theories about the source of religious longings are false, or if they are not, then mere knowledge of how these longings come about no more satisfies them than would a lengthy discourse on gastronomy serve as food to a starving man.

Granted, there are some individuals who seem to us at first blush to be exemplars of this new kind of maturity of character. They appear entirely abstemious with respect to spirit, and are quick to let us know it. But a careful examination of this particular post-Enlightenment vanity allows us on closer look to acknowledge that all of us—psychiatrists, psychologists, psychoanalysts of whatever stripe, or simply laymen who have inhaled the reductionist worldview with the spirits of the air—merely recreate within our supposedly secular domains all the same structures of dogma, devotion, and worship (of our fellow creatures) that we criticize as neurotic among the religious. The mature psychoanalyst works through his projections onto his family and friends, and his transference of all this onto his analyst, only to re-project it all over again onto his Institute, or onto Freud or Jung or—mirabile dictu—John Bradshaw. Nor do we count it as an advance should he find some way to mutilate his soul and so never again fall in love.

No, it is clear that the thirst for ultimate meaning and purpose is not at all slaked by simply describing, classifying, and analyzing it. No more so than is deconstructing a poem (or doing a word count on it) the same as loving it. When we have no higher object of our devotion, we make gods of the lower objects at hand. When we do not, or feel we cannot, worship God, we worship our own instinctive cravings instead, mostly not knowing what we are doing, and certainly not admitting it. But willy-nilly, one way or the other, worship we will.

II

Picture the field of individual human action—more precisely, of the motivation to action—as a triangle resting on its base. At a certain stage of our understanding, this triangle is empty, signifying our working assumption that all human action is determined by choice and free will. Again, in statistical language, we know of no factors whatever that account for the variability of action from one person, or group of people, to another. You will also note in this the subtle corollary that, with respect to cause, an utterly (100 percent) unpredictable event is indistinguishable from one that is freely willed, for were it not free, the action would in some measure be predicted by correlation to some other factor. ("Whose will?" in this case is, of course, another question we might ask.)

Now draw a line across the triangle about one-quarter of the way up from the base and fill it in. The area below this line represents, say, genetic influences, the biological differences among individuals that account for a significant proportion of the variability in action. The remaining area, still blank, rep-

* Strictly speaking, the reductionism of psychoanalysis is not to biological matter, but to "lower level" psychological constructs: the illusory, acting "self" is analyzed into its constituent, interacting parts, for example, the ego, id, and superego. However, Freud recognized, as early as 1895, that the use of these constructs was really just a temporary place-holder, as it were. They would have to do until science could build up a sufficiently detailed understanding of neurobiology so as to correlate the interactions of every psychic subsystem with the mechanical interactions of their neural substrates. Freud was correctly convinced that the validity of psychoanalysis as science (reductionism) was dependent on this correlation being absolute.

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resents what is left to us to attribute, if we wish, to choice and free will.

Next, draw a second line, perhaps another quarter of the way up, and fill in that space with a different color. This second area represents, say, nongenetic biological factors: intrauterine influences, diet, the effect of pollutants, viruses, and bacteria, etc. Again, the remaining even smaller area left blank above the line constitutes, presumably, what remains of free will and choice.

Now draw a third line yet further up and fill in this space with a third color representing family influences, and then a fourth line to demarcate the area of social influences, and so on. Each successive space we so delineate accounts for less and less of the remaining variability because the analyses grow increasingly complex and costly to perform and contribute less and less to our explanatory model. But slowly, relentlessly, the area remaining to "free will and choice" grows progressively smaller. Will it perhaps disappear altogether?

Well it may, and it will certainly grow ever smaller, perhaps asymptotically, as our scientific analysis grows ever more precise. But here is an astonishing thing: when it comes to almost every action that matters to us, no matter how small this space becomes, even if it shrinks to a mere point, we all—the most rigorous, rational, insistent scientist, even the Bertrand Russells among us—will live our lives just as though that tiny point were as dense as a neutron star, weightier by magnitudes than the weight of all the rest of the triangle, no matter how densely and fully filled in. And when that tiny point at the very peak of the triangle finds itself in a struggle against the pressing impact of all the rest, from the biological base on up; when the odds seem hopeless, and the struggle ordained to fail; not only will we ourselves still wrestle, our fellows will cheer us on as well, sometimes with tears barely choked back, at this quintessential manifestation of the human spirit.

Under what circumstances do we experience this sense of higher triumph? Do we cheer the Ivan Boeskys of this world who, overcoming not just the constraints of modest birth, but of modesty as well, have attained solid gold bathroom fixtures? Do we cheer the man who in spite of his physical unattractiveness beds a thousand women and, undefeated by the threat of sexually transmitted diseases, lives to tell of it? Hardly. Rather, we cheer, at the deepest levels of our being, the triumph of good over evil—over the evil that lies outside ourselves, and also the evil that lies within.

Upon reflection, we realize that the only domain of potential choice that means anything to us and which, if it exists at all, needs be a priori free is that of moral choice.

As a science, psychology thus inevitably tends toward an amoral view of man, in just the same way that it tends toward a view of him that has no place for free will and choice. Some psychologists have had the courage—if that is indeed what it is: foolhardiness might be a better term; intellectual consistency, at least—to claim that if the scientific view of man is both true and complete, and if this view leads inevitably to the abolition of "man" as embodied in such concepts as "freedom" and "goodness" (and consequent upon these, such concepts as "dignity" and "nobility of character"), why then, let us be truly abstemious and do away with them entirely, as has proposed B. F. Skinner.

But no more than Freud can Skinner pull himself up by his bootstraps to an Archimedean point of psychological leverage above his own dual being, instinctively selfish as anyone else, yet longing for something good beyond mere selfishness. For when asked, "Who shall lead us into this brave new world?" he chooses . . . himself, of course, and can find no better metaphor for this vaunted role than that of Jesus Christ the savior of mankind. Yet when asked to what end, he replies that it will make a better—not merely "an inevitable," "a better"—world.

This tiny, empty point at the apex of causality is indeed, to use T. S. Eliot's phrase, "the still point of the turning world." And toward this infinitesimal point of ultimate weight there emanates downward, as it were, a second, inverted triangle—one with no topmost boundary—a world of spirit utterly irreducible to the material world of causation below. The essential feature of this, the Jewish and Christian view of reality, is that it turns on the entirely nonmaterial, unnatural question of individual moral choice. With laser-like intensity, at every moment of our existence, this question is aimed and focused at the invisible apex of our being. In answering this question, over a lifetime, again and again, in thought, word, and action, a man discovers the only source of true and lasting joy, or else of deceptive, fleeting pleasure. He turns left, and legions of demons descend in flaming torture; he turns right, and a chorus of angels raise their voices in a holy song of which Handel's Messiah is but the dimmest foreshadowing. The spiritual dimension of reality has, in this view, little to do with "magic," or altered states of consciousness, or healthy ego development, or the Goddess, or n-dimensional parallel universes, or the Earth as God's body, or archetypes that have a representation in the world of instinct; it claims, rather, that the overarching principle of existence, and therefore especially of man, is the revealed moral law. It is from this upper triangle alone that pours out upon us the living water that alone can slake our deepest thirst.

Invisible and intangible, no "thing" whatsoever, this dimension exerts the greatest possible impact on our lives, as much in the myriads of tiny decisions that constitute our quotidian existence in relation to ourselves and others as in the rarer moments of

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genius that define a culture. Freud said, "Before Art, psychoanalysis lays down its arms," but in this he was being rather too like Nietszche (for whom, also, art was the only appropriate metaphysical arena). Before all manifestations of the Spirit in man, psychoanalysis lays down its arms, or should.

III

From the perspective of a classical, antireligious form of psychoanalysis, the faith that guides men in their moral choices is not only a fable, but a neurosis. Whether it acknowledges doing so or not, it unabashedly gives pride of place—above all other forms of understanding—to biological reductionism.

A more tolerant, "hermenuetic" form of psychoanalysis treats the religious impulse, and therefore the human spirit, as a kind of sublimation akin to art: in essence derivative, still, of unconscious instinctive conflict, but acceptable as a better compromise—a story we tell ourselves because we are creatures of "narrative." This approach, too, bows (sometimes unwittingly) to mechanical reductionism as the superordinate form of understanding, but adds to it a kind of condescending noblesse oblige. The patient, unaware that his spirit is being so perceived, may benefit indeed from the kindly tolerance of the wise and caring therapist, but the therapist himself, ironically, is left to shoulder the burden of a frame of mind in which all of his own nobler impulses are subtly undermined by the keen edge of his own understanding.

When men do not worship God, they do not worship nothing, they worship anything. In my view, a proper psychoanalysis, and psychiatry, should assume a welcome place at the table of human understanding, not at its head but as a guest. It should recognize in a faith that orients itself toward the moral order the highest expression of human character, whose place at the head of table it would be abashed to supplant. It should not claim for itself an ability to stand above that faith and "understand" it, thereby itself turning into an ersatz faith; it can, and should, however, help people to clear away the neurotic obstacles that make faith—and hence a moral life—as difficult to achieve as it has of late become for so many.

The largely invisible cost exacted by the usurpation of faith by psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychiatry has been great, both in our private lives and in the public order. Shelley said of the romantic poets that they were "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind." The description, it seems to me, is more apt today (and equally grandiose) with regard to Freud, Jung, and their many fractious heirs. What is frightening is that this very influential faction of society should be as secular as it is: more than 90 percent of Americans believe in God, fewer than 10 percent do not; the figures are the reverse among mental health professionals. We professionals by and large also continue to believe, however improbably, that a better, not a worse, society will result from the more widespread adoption of our secular perspective.

In fact, the reverse is true, and the evidence is all around us. FT

The Steeple of Ste. Odile

Dear Ste. Odile,
Do you not see the point?
I chose you quite by chance
My sheer sister
From among all the others
To be the gnomon
Whose measured shadow falls
On all my delicate sorrows

I was thinking only
Of the sharp beauty
That you sew into the sky

Why did you draw me
An arbitrary pilgrim?
For I lost myself
In the high dwindling
Of your Gothic schemes
As you raised
Your long, ascetic finger
Warning the insouciant
streets
To behave and pay attention

Kevin McCaffrey

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Poland: Reflections On a New World

Richard John Neuhaus

For a national capital, Warsaw is very new and, finally, unconvincing as a city. After World War II, it was rebuilt from almost total rubble. Apart from the reconstructed Old Town, it is with some exceptions an exhibition of ugliness. The Communists, it seems, were at war with all three transcendentals—the good, the true, and the beautiful. Stalinist monumentalism consorts with state-architecture gray in large stretches of concrete slabs, all conspiring to suppress the difference and surprise that make space human. One welcomes even the McDonald's and Marlboro billboards that, since the revolution of 1989, have provided a breath of color and relief from sameness.

A three-hour train ride to the south is Cracow, magnificent Cracow. Spared the physical ravages of the war, it is a maddeningly delightful mélange of architectural styles, of churches, priories, schools, and castles; of nooks and crannies stuffed with the national memorabilia of more than a millennium. Cracow gave to the world its cardinal archbishop, Karol Wojtyla. Not far away is the shrine of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. Also not far away, in a different direction, is Auschwitz.

It was this writer's first time in Poland, and impressions came fast and sometimes confused. The fall elections were only just past, and the good guys—those who favor a free economy and democratic interaction between religion, culture, and politics—were discouraged. The other guys had won. They are called post-Communists and represent themselves as democratic socialists. They had not won big, getting only about 35 percent of the vote, but a complicated system of apportioning parliamentary seats gave them a large majority. Almost nobody we talked with—politicians, clerics, intellectuals, journalists—thinks there is a real danger that the new government will turn toward authoritarian rule, never mind return to the totalitarianism of the past. But they are understandably depressed to see the apparatchiks of the old regime riding high in newly democratic Poland.

It is the more depressing to our friends because almost everything since the Pope's first visit in 1979 and the insurgency of Solidarity had been so exhilaratingly hopeful. When communism collapses and the Russians leave and Poland is free, everything, absolutely everything, will be possible, they had told themselves. And now this. Explanations of what went wrong abound. The two most frequently encountered are, first, that the right-center forces (meaning liberal democrats) wasted their electoral impact by fragmenting into a multitude of parties; and, second, that Church leadership frightened the voters by giving an unseemly appearance of ambition for political power.

Slowly the reality is sinking in that it is part of democratic "normality" to screw up and lose from time to time. The post-Communist alliance with another leftist group, the Peasants' Party, may well prove a shaky combination. The hope is expressed that the alliance will fall apart and there will be new elections within two years. Perhaps both the liberal democrats and Church leadership learned something from this round and will do better next time. That is the comforting idea encountered in the aftermath of this electoral disappointment. An American invited to talk about democratic theory and practice comes away with a more hopeful sense of the Polish situation than that evinced by many of his Polish interlocutors. At least that is true of this American.

Poles are determined to demonstrate that they are full participants in the democratic West, and to do so immediately. That is why the recent election was not just a disappointment but an embarrassment. What must democrats in the West think of us now? We in the West should think they have made a fine beginning and have suffered a temporary setback. The

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labyrinthine and bloody history of Poland has provided slight experience with the basic ideas and practices of democratic governance. Even among sophisticated intellectuals, one is caught by surprise in discovering large lacunae in the understanding of how democracies work. There is a frequent and sometimes touching eagerness to emulate the United States. Certainly that is not to be discouraged entirely, for America is history's most spectacular experiment in democracy. But one feels obliged to point out our problems, especially when it comes to the role of religion in a free society.

More on that, but first an aside about Auschwitz. When you go there, keep in mind that there is Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II, the second more commonly known as Birkenau. In many ways, the second is more important and one should visit it first. Only in the shadow of the brutal wasteland of Birkenau, where the killing was wholesale and savage beyond description, can one understand Auschwitz I. The first Auschwitz, unfortunately, is where most of the tourists go. Entering through the gate bearing the infamous legend *Arbeit Macht Frei*, one comes upon the blocks or barracks neatly arranged along tree-lined streets that might be considered pleasant if one didn't know what happened there. There is a coffee and souvenir shop, and hordes of impatient schoolchildren being shuffled through exhibits that, so far as one could see, failed to evoke awe in the face of unspeakable evil.

One unfortunate exhibit has large drawings of beastly Nazis beating frightened inmates. Whatever the intention, it tends to reduce what happened to a cartoon strip. More formidable are the rows upon rows upon rows of identification photographs of men, women, and children. Just the name, when they entered the system, when they died. But one must stop and study the faces; this cannot be hurried. More formidable, too, is the cell of Father Maximilian Kolbe who volunteered to die in another's place. There John Paul II knelt in prayer, and one joins in his petition, remembering the portraits and little shrines to Father Kolbe that are to be found in almost every church in Poland.

If Auschwitz I is too much an antiseptic museum, bordering at points on turning the horror of the Holocaust into kitsch, Birkenau is unremitting truth. If it is true that humanity cannot bear too much truth, perhaps that explains why so few go to Birkenau, which is only a five-minute drive from the more visited Auschwitz. There is a suitably brutal monument to the dead, but apart from that there are no exhibits at Birkenau. Not even photographs of the victims. After a while there were too many of them and the Nazis deemed taking identification photos to be too expensive. It used to be said that as many as four million died in Auschwitz-Birkenau—Jews, Polish Christians, Gypsies, political criminals, homosexuals, others. Now your guide tells you that the accepted figure is somewhat over one million. When the ghastly business was at full throttle, perhaps even the efficient Germans were not counting very carefully. Whether we have the exact count does not seem to matter very much. We know that they have all been counted.

Birkenau is in ruins; vast, sprawling fields of crumbling barracks, and the gas chambers, and the crematoria. Unlike Auschwitz, Birkenau's deteriorated condition places it in a specific moment of time. Here, you know, fifty and more years ago the deed that defies moral imagination was done. There are occasional little signs in several languages: "It is Dangerous to Walk in the Ruins." It is. One thinks about those who were killed, about those who did the killing, about the revisionists who deny that it happened, about one's own capacity for suffering, for evil, and for self-deception. You want to get out of the place, but then are drawn back to look again, to touch again the crumbling wooden bunks, the long concrete latrines where thousands of naked bodies squeezed their way to a hole, human beings maintaining the dignity of going to the toilet before they die.

The nuns are gone from the convent bordering Auschwitz. This is an exceedingly delicate subject among Poles, many of whom felt unfairly put upon by "international Jewry." The controversy over the convent no doubt fed residual feelings of anti-Semitism, a prejudice that in Poland is commonly described as "anti-Semitism without Jews." On the other hand, we met a nun in Cracow who is promoting Jewish-Christian dialogue. It turns out to be Jewish-Christian dialogue without Jews, which seems somewhat more improbable than anti-Semitism without Jews. The entire subject may not be closed. Near Birkenau is another chapel, belonging to the local parish. Some Poles fear there will be agitation for removing that, too. One hopes that doesn't happen. Whatever one thinks about the nuns having to leave the convent, it raises the question of whether there is any part of the Lord's earth that is beyond sanctification by prayer and sacred sign. Neither Christians nor Jews are of one mind on that. Christians, however, might remember Golgotha. In the Christian account of things, the most sacred site in the universe is the place where God was killed. One ponders such things while wandering around Birkenau. It is dangerous to walk in the ruins.

Death and dying and martyrdom are everywhere publicly present in Poland. In addition to Father Kolbe, there is at a parish church in Warsaw a shrine to Father Jerzy Popieluszko, a wildly popular dissident priest who was killed by the Communists in 1984. In the Warsaw cathedral one pauses to pray at the tomb of the archbishop hero of that era, Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski. Above the tomb is inscribed

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Polonia Semper Fidelis—Poland Ever Faithful. The faithful of Poland are a wonder to behold. At times in its history, the boundaries of Poland reached north to Lithuania and east to Ukraine, and the country contained large numbers of Protestants, Orthodox, and, of course, Jews. Within its present borders, the country is almost totally Catholic. In the cities it seems that Masses are going on perpetually, with churches packed and the intensity of piety palpable. We arrived at the Dominican church in Cracow in time for the regular Sunday evening students' Mass: more than two thousand young people wedged into every available space and listening to Scripture and sermons as though their souls depended on it. In Poland one gets some sense of what is meant by a Catholic culture, and why there is such worry about the secularism and consumerism associated with the cultural invasion from the West.

Under the Communist regime, Cardinal Wyszynski ran a very tight ship. Some call it authoritarian, but few doubt that it was necessary to protect the Church against penetration and subversion by the regime. Decision-making was highly centralized and almost totally clericalized. The people understood that it had to be that way. In the words of George Weigel (*The Final Revolution*), the Church had a monopoly on virtue. It was the only space free from totalitarian control, and its borders had to be assiduously patrolled in order to keep it free. Now, says Weigel (in whose company we made this trip), the challenge to the Church is not only to surrender her monopoly but actively to cultivate other centers and institutions of virtue. Put differently, a time of unremitting confrontation must give way to a time of democratic participation. Not of course that the Church herself can be democratically governed, but she should acknowledge and welcome the integrity of decision-making by others in the spheres of politics, economics, and culture. In a free society, the influence of the Church is exercised not so much in direct relationship to the state as it is mediated through the activity of the faithful.

Bishops and priests, especially priests in the countryside, are having a hard time making this transition. They were formed by a mind-set that assumed that the role of the laity is to pray, pay, and obey—also in the realm of the political. There was merit in that during the years of oppression, but the mind-set is now a serious obstacle to the development of a democratic political culture. In June of 1993, the bishops conference issued an admirable statement on the Church's nonpartisanship in the forthcoming elections. One is told that most bishops abided by the statement, but some bishops and priests joined the Church's authority to nationalist parties that did very poorly indeed in the balloting.

"The Church," says a former dissident and devout Catholic, "was heavy-handed when it did not need to be. Most of the people were ready to give the Church what it wanted, but they wanted to be asked nicely. It is supposed to be part of the new era that you discuss things rather than just demand things." The sticking points in the Church's role leading up to the elections were several. There was the concordat with the Vatican, which was negotiated in great secrecy and then—or so the complaint goes—presented as a fait accompli without the public discussion necessary for popular acceptance. Also, the question of whether the crucifix should be displayed in the parliament was politically exploited as a litmus test of whether politicians were or were not faithful to "Catholic Poland." In addition, the Church wanted the return of its many properties—schools, monasteries, charitable institutions. There was little serious disagreement that they should be returned, but some thought the Church leadership was eager to the point of grasping. And, of course, there was abortion.

In the Communist era, abortion was the contraceptive of no choice for most Polish women. As in other parts of the former evil empire, abortion rates were astronomically high. The last government adopted laws protective of the unborn, and abortion rates dropped dramatically. But those who are suspicious of the Church's political ambitions successfully portrayed such laws as an instance of the Church undemocratically "imposing" Catholic teaching on the country. Some who took that position are militants who believe in a secular state in a secular society. Unlikely though it may seem, there is a junior-league ACLU mentality among some intellectuals and politicians. As with the ACLU and its kind here, they agitate for a "separation of church and state" that is tantamount to the separation of religion from public life.

Others who resented the Church's role in the abortion controversy, however, are committed Catholics who have no problem with the Church's influence in public life but insist that it should be exercised in a different and more democratic manner. (One is also reminded that, even among the committed, there is a lively Polish tradition of anticlericalism that was only temporarily suspended during the Communist years.) In discussions it became evident that very few people on any side of the abortion question challenge the assumption that it is a matter of legislating "the Catholic position." In other words, abortion is presented as a religious question. The alternative, of course, is to make the public argument that abortion is an assault upon the foundation of democratic beliefs about human rights and responsibilities. That alternative way of making the argument, needless to say, is not well understood here in the United States, so it is hardly surprising that it has not taken firm root in Poland after just a few years of freedom to engage in public debate. Hardly surprising, but still disturbing.

Church leaders and perhaps most of the Polish

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people are puzzled and uneasy about "the separation of church and state" (the phrase is one of America's less happy exports). They worry about the naked public square. The separation of religion from public life in Poland is neither practicable nor conceivable. The separation of religiously based moral conviction from political debate and decision is also profoundly antidemocratic. Bishops and intellectuals in Poland who have some knowledge of the American experience with "separationism" are not without reason for their fears. But some experiments must be tried and some risks must be taken if Catholic piety and teaching in Poland are to contribute constructively to the project of a free and stable society. It is almost impossible to envision a Polish society either free or stable without the support of the Church.

In 1978, in his inaugural sermon as Pope, John Paul repeatedly declared to the world, and very particularly to Christians under communism, "Be not afraid!" Today perhaps, the Pope's message to the bishops and faithful of Poland is "Be not afraid of freedom." The Gospel will prevail and the Church's mission will be sustained. God has seen to that in the past, and He will see to it in the future. What the gates of hell cannot undo, neither tyranny nor freedom can undo. One powerful reason to be hopeful about Poland—and about other Catholic societies trying to cope with democracy—is that for the first time the project of the free society is firmly supported by the Church's social teaching. That is one of the greatest achievements of this pontificate, as is notably evident in the 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*.

Until the Second Vatican Council and its further explication through this pontificate, Catholicism tended to view the free society—also known as liberal democracy—with deep suspicion, and with good cause. The ideas, language, and practice of liberalism dating from the French experience of 1789 were, more often than not, militantly anti-Christian and specifically anti-Catholic. It is not surprising that, among Church leaders and faithful in Poland, liberalism is a very dirty word. Neither here nor in Poland need there be any sense of urgency about rehabilitating the term. What is legitimate and important in the liberal project is articulated by this Pope in the terminology of "the free society." As a necessary corrective to liberalisms past and present, the 1993 encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*, offers a compelling argument that freedom depends upon and must be ordered to truth.

It is not too much to say that Catholic social teaching today offers the most comprehensive and convincing argument that we have for human freedom—religious, civil, political, cultural, and economic. Certainly there is nothing comparable in seriousness of argument to, say, *Centesimus Annus* or *Veritatis Splendor* from any other Christian communion. Regrettably, that teaching has not seriously been engaged by Catholic theologians, intellectuals, and educators either here or in Poland. The Poles have more excuse; they've been fighting for their lives in the years since the Council. Here, by contrast, we have a Catholic intellectual establishment that is for the most part so smug, so spoiled, so self-absorbed, so petty in its perpetually snide reaction to this "reactionary" Pope. (In that establishment, commentary on *Veritatis Splendor* has ranged from hand-wringing over whether the Pope is clamping down on dissenters to complaints that, God help us, the encyclical does not employ "gender-inclusive" language.)

So the Polish situation may in some ways be better than ours. They are in the early stages of building democracy with the full support of the Church's official teaching. Unlike Catholics of an earlier time in this country, they do not need to worry about ecclesiastical censure when they advance the case for the free society. Also, those most effectively advancing the case there are determinedly orthodox theologically. They are fiercely loyal to the Church and the magisterium. One does not sense there any tension, never mind contradiction, between fidelity and freedom; the two are mutually reinforcing. As a result, it is possible that in the new world of Poland they will get the questions of religion and society—including church-state relations—more nearly right than we have succeeded in doing here. The world, and not least of all Americans, should watch with keen interest as Poland makes its way toward a society that is both Christian and free—the more securely free because it is Christian, and the more authentically Christian because it is free. FT

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The Liberalism that We Need

Maciej Zieba

The God who gave us life gave us liberty.
Thomas Jefferson

They clamor for freedom—God, make them heed. For freedom resembles the possession of a flute: If it is handled by a person deaf to music he will lose his breath—and torment the ears of his neighbors.
Juliusz Slowacki

There is liberalism, and then there is liberalism. We in the post-Communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe, and especially we in Poland, do not have an easy time sorting out the varieties of liberalism that are being proposed to us. We know that the eyes of the West, especially American eyes, are on us during this difficult time of transition. And I do not mind admitting that we are looking at the experience of societies that have had long experience with liberal democracy. We have much to learn. And, just maybe, others will, in time, be able to learn from our experience.

This is an essay attempting to sort out the different meanings of liberalism. Because Poland is undeniably—although in complicated and sometimes confused ways—a strongly Catholic society, it is not surprising that we look to the Church's social teaching as a resource for our political theory and practice. In this connection, particular attention must be paid the 1991 encyclical of John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*. Also in the established democracies, liberals had high praise for the encyclical, noting in particular its thorough critique of socialism and the welfare state, its vigorous affirmation of democracy and the market economy, and its powerful emphasis on the importance of personal freedom.

Some liberal commentators have difficulty, however, with the Pope's insistence that there is a necessary and mutual relationship between freedom and truth. Milton Friedman, a classical liberal of the libertarian persuasion who has been called "the pope of liberalism," says that John Paul's way of connecting freedom and truth "freezes the blood in the veins." Friedman ends his generally favorable review of *Centesimus Annus* with questions that others also ask: Whose truth is at stake? Who defines what is true? For all the fine words about democracy and freedom, doesn't the teaching of John Paul still echo with the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition?

Such questions reach the heart of the problem that a certain tradition of liberalism has with Catholic thought—and vice versa. For the adherents of that liberal credo, absolute truth does not exist, or at least we must publicly act as though it does not exist. In this view, any public assertion of "truth" is dangerous, carrying with it an authoritarian, if not totalitarian, threat. One can understand this anxiety. The Church, which, to put it delicately, has not always been so friendly to liberal democracy, bears a strong measure of responsibility for this anxiety. Surely the time has come, however, to examine more critically the assumption that the assertion of absolute truth is a threat to liberalism. Might it not be the case that a free society cannot be sustained without the idea of absolute truth? If the denial of absolute truth is the necessary price to be paid for liberal democracy, liberal democracy is going to have a very hard time of it—in Poland and, I dare say, in most of the world of the twenty-first century.

"Pluralism" is the term that immediately and inescapably arises in such a discussion of freedom and truth. We live in a pluralistic world, we are told, and that is true. Therefore nobody can say what is the truth, we are told, and that is not necessarily

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true. A more critical examination suggests that liberalism betrays a remarkable propensity for raising pluralism to the position of an absolute truth that must be embraced in order to secure freedom. Ewa Bienkowska, the distinguished philosopher at the University of Avignon, examines the way in which these arguments appear in the very influential thought of Isaiah Berlin. According to Berlin, he writes, "liberal culture teaches us about the possibility of the existence of holy principles, albeit not absolute and imperishable. Social life requires certain principles for the sake of which we must be prepared to do battle. Berlin does not hesitate to speak of the 'sanctity' of such principles, so long as nobody builds upon them a structure of truth that claims to be absolute. Berlin urges us to defend these principles since they are the product of a civilization with which we identify and which, in turn, defines us and helps us to realize our highest values."

As has been pointed out frequently (although perhaps not frequently enough), the claim that all ideas, opinions, and convictions are the product of culture—are "socially constructed"—is fraught with difficulties. It is a claim, however, that seems to be essential to the liberal apotheosis of "pluralism." In this view, some people defend their homeland, others collaborate with the conqueror, and each choice is the product of a different "cultural paradigm." Some eat human flesh in the same way that others avoid pork and shrimp, because of culture. Some care for the sick and marginal, others devote themselves to eliminating the "unfit," and who is to say who is right and who is wrong? Radical pluralism—intellectual and moral pluralism—seems to be the only truth. Pluralism is thus presented as the fundamental principle of reality, the Absolute. Absolute truth is denied in the name of an absolute truth claim that eludes rational challenge and assumes the character of a religious faith. It is not too much to say that pluralism is the operative religion of at least one stream of liberal theory and practice.

The "religion of pluralism" is very tentative in discussing the Absolute. It typically avoids such discussion, except to deny the reality of what it refuses to discuss. Radical pluralism does have a great deal to say about human nature, however. There is an anthropology of pluralism. Explicitly or by way of taking it for granted, that anthropology assumes that all people are equal, that all people are good (or at least that evil is nonexistent), and that the human condition is fundamentally solitary. Since people and cultures are equal, it is the individual who must decide for himself. This becomes the chief, sometimes the only, meaning of freedom. And it is, of course, a "negative freedom," that is to say, it is delineated by minimal interference by anyone or anything that might restrict my right to choose.

Just as one can be a "Sunday Catholic," one can easily be a "Sunday pluralist" who casually and unreflectively goes along with the motto "live and let live." It is much more difficult, however, to be a consistent pluralist. Pluralism is, after all, the faith of a lonely and, one would think, bitter self-consciousness. It is a faith that requires of its adherents a heroic pessimism in being religiously devoted to the realization of principles that are, as Isaiah Berlin says, holy but not absolute or imperishable. Those who embrace the belief that there is no possible appeal to truth beyond the truth of pluralism have the heavy burden of trying to work out the implications of that belief for their own lives. Our concern here, however, is the significance of that belief for the ordering of society.

Can a free society be built on the religion of pluralism? Put differently, is pluralism capable of becoming a state religion—or, as some prefer, a "civil religion"? It seems unlikely, despite the remarkably successful missionary work of this new faith in the last two centuries. One reason why it is unlikely is that this liberalism has no aspiration toward becoming an established church, and indeed has principles and dispositions that militate against such a development. *Religare* refers to what binds together, and the liberalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is devoted to liberating the individual from what is binding. Many critics have thought this to be a rather dubious project. The Oxford historian Owen Chadwick writes, "This was not very realistic, but at least it was the expression of faith and not of experience. The liberal mind was individualistic. It [was concerned with] solitary consciousness and its right to be respected. Nonetheless, people cannot be complete individualists if society is to survive." It is very hard to draw the line between liberation from stifling and oppressive bonds, on the one hand, and the destruction of community, on the other. The liberalism in question has no principled criteria by which to draw that line. It moves only in one direction: it can effectively eliminate abuses of oppressive community but it cannot create or protect the communities required to make and keep life human.

I make no claims to having discovered anything new in this connection. There is a vast and growing literature on "the crisis of liberalism" in which attention is directed to the problematic relationship between community and autonomy. Out of this have come, notably in America, liberal proposals for a "communitarian" reconstruction of liberal theory and practice. Elements of this seem hopeful, but I believe it will not get very far unless it addresses the particular species of community that we might, for lack of a better term, call spiritual community. Eric Voegelin claimed that liberals "are insufficiently intelligent to understand the problem of endowing matters of the spirit with an institutional dimension." Ralf Dahrendorf addresses the question in a somewhat different way. For all that liberal institu-

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tions can do effectively, says Dahrendorf, they are "cold" institutions. "Warm" institutions, by contrast, provide a social rootedness, and a personal identity within a communal affirmation of encompassing spiritual meaning. Liberalism not only underestimates the importance of warm institutions, it frequently undermines them, viewing them as the enemy of individual autonomy. It seems doubtful that many people today will knowingly choose the cold institutions of liberal efficiency, if it means giving up the warm institutions of communal meaning. If people do not choose liberalism, that ought to be of concern to liberals for whom liberalism is most essentially a matter of choice.

The key concept of liberalism is freedom. It seeks to guarantee the greatest possible domain for choice, and does so by warding off the idea of absolute truth that might limit choice. Liberalism's "negative" freedom, however, becomes a freedom to make decisions whose significance is bestowed only by the solitary individual, by me. Such freedom might be compared with placing a bet on any number in a game of roulette in which it is entirely up to me to decide whether black or red wins. I may tell myself that I am winning all the time, but what does "win" mean in this context? If there is no truth apart from my choosing, if there is no absolute truth, absolute freedom is both sad and empty.

Moreover, it is dangerous. "If there is no truth, then everything which I say could become truth. . . . The idea of absolute truth opposes a relativism which negates the existence of truth. A relativist, believing in the nonexistence of truth, does not wish to discuss the matter. He remains oblivious to the fact that such an attitude leads to usurping a sui generis authority, and towards the right of the clenched fist and not the right of truth." That observation is not from a papal encyclical but from Karl Popper, author of *The Open Society*. Popper understood that the distance between freedom that is not oriented toward truth and authoritarianism is not very great. One is led to conclude that a liberal society that is consistent with the chief features of liberalism—individualism, a denial of absolute truth, a depreciation of the domain of the spirit, and freedom defined only negatively—would be no society at all. In the absence of communal bonds and shared meanings related to truth, society simply atrophies. Liberal theory and practice cannot explain or sustain society; it cannot explain or sustain a liberal society.

The strengths and the weaknesses of liberalism are played out in history. Liberalism was, in many respects, a rational reaction to the social reality that prevailed in the eighteenth century. The role of the Catholic Church in that social reality was by no means incidental. After the terrible wars of religion, and under the influence of the aggressive anticlericalism of the Enlightenment, especially of the Enlightenment in France, liberalism saw the Roman Catholic Church as its chief opponent. In some parts of Europe, religion as such was viewed as the enemy. The state was also the enemy, insofar as the state had absolutist aspirations that monarchs sought to realize by an alliance of throne and altar. Because they were so pervasively influenced by religion, liberalism's enmity was also directed against the family and, more generally, against all traditional institutions that subordinate the individual to the socially normative. The emancipation of the individual, combined with a passion for the "rational" reordering of society, understandably cast the Church, and particularly the papacy, in the role of arch-enemy.

Also understandable is the reaction of the Catholic Church to these developments—a reaction in which the Church felt called upon to do battle against liberalism en bloc. Recall the famous (some would say infamous) eightieth proposition of the *Syllabus of Errors,* which declared it to be impossible that the "bishop of Rome should come to terms with progress, liberalism, and the contemporary state." If that sounds very sharp, and it does, we should remember that it came in response to an extremely hostile political climate. A classic French liberal election program put the matter in plain terms: "We wish to realize the basic liberal formula—free churches in a free and sovereign state by means of a ban on monastic orders, the seizure of mortmain Church property, and the abolition of payments for the clergy out of public funds." If in 1864 Pius IX felt besieged, it was because he was besieged.

In historical retrospect the conflict between liberalism and the Church takes on the appearance of having been unavoidable. It may be, however, that liberalism had incorrectly located its opponent. The opponent, one might suggest, was not religion but ideology. By ideology I mean an all-comprehending explanation of social reality that is premised upon an uncritical notion of the true and the good and is in the service of creating or preserving a particular social order. Not truth, but the ideological deployment of truth, is the threat to freedom. Religious faith necessarily involves a commitment to absolute truth, and indeed to the Absolute, who is God. But the religious person should know that this truth cannot be deployed for our own purposes; the truth is not something that we "possess" in the sense of having it at our disposal. When truth is viewed as something that is in our service, rather than our being in the service of truth, it is very easy for religious faith to degenerate into ideology. This can happen despite the best of intentions, and there is no need to deny that Christians have at times attempted to advance their faith in the form of ideology.

John Paul II argues in *Centesimus Annus* that the Christian message contains an anti-ideological core. The Church is not the owner of the Truth by which

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she is constituted, nor has she examined this Truth sufficiently. As the servant of the Truth, the Church is the servant of all truth. If we are faithful to that understanding, we will resist any effort to turn Christianity into ideology. Ideology claims to own the truth that it seeks to deploy for specific purposes. All religion is susceptible to becoming ideology. There can be Christian, Jewish, or Muslim ideologies. But not only religion is susceptible. Nobody can doubt that there are Marxist, scientific, Freudian, and liberal ideologies. The last—liberal ideology—would seem most oxymoronic, since the theory and practice of liberalism has built into it protections against the kind of "totalism" produced by ideology. Yet, as we have seen, the denial of absolute truth threatens to undo the truth of liberalism. Again, the enemy of liberalism is not the recognition of absolute truth but an absolute claim of control over truth. Therein lies the menace of totalitarianism.

Isaiah Berlin was undoubtedly right about the difficulty with a concept of "positive" liberty that assumes an answer to the question of "who or what is the source of power or intervention that can decide that someone is to do this and not that, to be such and no other." That is the kind of positive freedom proposed by Marxists in the name of historical necessity. It is freedom subjected to an absolute principle, which principle is understood and disclosed by its leading adherents. Toward the realization of that freedom there is but a straight and narrow path along which we are to march in disciplined file. I suggest that Berlin is much less convincing, however, when he says that there is a direct relationship between accepting the existence of ultimate principles and despotism. Totalitarian rule is risked not by the acknowledgment of truth but by the claim to control truth. As the Pope writes in *Centesimus Annus*, the danger arises when we think that we already possess a truth and have become sufficiently acquainted with it so that we are able to "interpret the extremely diversified socio-political reality by means of a rigid scheme."

There is liberalism and then there is liberalism. The liberalism that is radically individualistic, denies the reality of absolute truth, and can affirm only "negative" freedom is incapable of sustaining society, especially a liberal society. There is available to us another liberalism, however, one that is rooted in the Anglo-Saxon and, more particularly, in the American tradition. In this liberalism, freedom is not separated from the existence of absolute truth; freedom can be oriented to truth. In this tradition, there is no need to pretend to have the only correct solution to all social problems. Freedom is like the magnetic needle of a compass, never immobile, always pointing to something beyond itself. In this tradition, liberalism is not threatened by the formation of spiritual communities that witness to, and to some extent embody, the "beyond" to which freedom points. Here the "warm" institutions can be cherished and secure. Here, in distinction from Berlin's negative liberty and positive liberty, we are invited to an understanding of what Lord Acton called "ordered liberty."

Catholicism is in profound and irreversible conflict, at the level both of theory and practice, with the individualistic and necessarily relativistic liberalism described above. But a liberalism that is respectful of community and open to absolute truth is becoming an exceedingly important part of Catholic social thought. Even a few decades ago such a statement would have seemed quite implausible. Among almost all liberals, including American liberals, Catholicism (and the Pope personally) was viewed as the foremost enemy of freedom. At the same time, the Catholic Church often seemed unable to distinguish between faith and ideology, between the right to make errors and the approval of those errors. The whole liberal package—economic, political, cultural—was the object of deep suspicion on the part of the Church. Much has changed in these decades. Liberalism has changed, as evidence the community- and truth-oriented critique of liberalism launched by liberals in recent years. As some American writers have discussed in detail, there is today a *Kulturkampf* that is in many respects a struggle between rival versions of liberalism.

And, of course, the Church's self-understanding has developed, as dramatically evident in the Second Vatican Council. The council's Declaration on Religious Freedom declares that the right to liberty belongs to the very foundation of human nature, while the Pastoral Constitution on the Church makes unmistakably clear that man can turn toward the Good only by way of freedom. This understanding of religious freedom is by no means limited to the spheres ordinarily called spiritual. It is an anthropological understanding in which freedom is perceived as constitutive of human thought, behavior, and aspiration. A greatly enhanced and freshly articulated understanding of freedom enables the Church to engage, much more constructively than was before possible, in public reflections about the meaning of market economics and democratic political order.

Such constructive public engagement is, of course, a mark of this pontificate. Especially in *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul proposes a careful yet bold rethinking of what is meant by a free society. A market economy is necessary, he says, not only because it is more efficient than other systems but because it is based on personal freedom. Such an economy can promote human creativity and cultivate the habits of cooperation and accountability. Similarly, a democratic political order recognizes the integrity of the political and makes possible the fullest participation in decisions that affect the entire society. The encyclical's critique of totalitarianism has been much

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and rightly praised, but insufficient attention has been given the Pope's more general critique of ideology—including the temptation to reduce religion to ideology. This factor in the argument of *Centesimus Annus* addresses directly the anxieties of those who fear that imposing an ideology is the permanent and, given the opportunity, irresistible temptation for the Catholic Church.

The Catholic affirmation that man is created for freedom might be cheered by liberals of all varieties. The opinion is expressed by some that the developments of the council and subsequent papal teaching is simply a case of the Church "catching up" with what liberals knew all along. That is, I believe, a gravely mistaken liberal conceit. The proponents of individualistic liberalism must come to terms with John Paul's argument on the integral connection between freedom and truth. Like Milton Friedman, they are made uneasy by the assertion of *Centesimus Annus* that "freedom loses its content in a world without truth." They fear that this means that somebody—and who more likely than the Catholic Church?—must impose its version of the truth. But John Paul recognizes that such imposition is the denial of freedom. As he says in a recent encyclical on the missionary life of the Church (*Redemptoris Missio*), "The Church imposes nothing, she only proposes." A free society includes the freedom of the Church to propose its understanding of the truth, to which understanding people can respond in freedom. In exercising their choice, some people may decide against freedom, but in doing so they are deciding against what the Church proposes.

The concept of freedom proposed by John Paul is in no way what Isaiah Berlin means by the "positive" freedom associated with totalitarianism. There is a powerful anti-ideological and anti-authoritarian component in the argument of *Centesimus Annus*. At the same time, John Paul reverses the direction of the liberal critique. Liberalism that systematically excludes the question of absolute truth is, he suggests, less a philosophy than a form of atheism or skeptical relativism. Liberalism that excludes truth is unable to contend for its own truth, and is thus left defenseless in the face of totalitarianisms that claim to be *the* truth. Liberal societies that exclude or stifle communities that bear witness to truth unwittingly end up by acting as though they possess the absolute truth—the existence of which they theoretically deny.

Many more books and articles will no doubt be written about "the crisis of liberalism." *Centesimus Annus* is a critically important contribution to that discussion. Liberals have not begun to appreciate the nature or depth of the crisis until they rethink the concept of freedom, which both theoretically and historically is the cornerstone of liberalism. Freedom, says John Paul, is not only a gift and a right but a duty and a task. There can be no secure freedom that is not grounded in truth, including the truth that man is made for freedom. And there can be no grounding in truth unless communities and persons-in-community are free publicly to propose the truth that they think they know, submitting it to the free response of others. Individuals are free to make the mistake of thinking that freedom means freedom from truth rather than freedom for truth. The institutions of ordered liberty make large allowance for disordered liberty. But a free society, if it is to be sustainable, must be able to articulate the truth that makes freedom both possible and imperative. As, for example, in the declaration, "We hold these truths."

Catholic social teaching is not simply catching up with the liberalism of the last two centuries. In a manner deeply respectful of the achievements of liberalism, especially its institutional achievements, the Church is challenging liberalism to reconstitute itself on a more adequate conception of human freedom. Although it will meet resistance from anti-Catholic liberals and from Catholic anti-liberals, it is not too much to say that, on the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, John Paul II has proposed to the world a Catholic version of liberalism. It is, I am persuaded, the liberalism that we need. FT

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Christians and Postmoderns

J. Bottum

I

We are living at a time near the end of the world. Not that our age is apocalyptic: apocalypse means an uncovering, a revelation, and revelation is what we lack. And not that our age is eschatological: eschatology means the discourse, reason, science, the *logos* of last things, and all that kind of scientific discourse is coming to an end now. All we have left is the eschaton itself and the disquietude of decline.

The atom bomb, I think, hid this from us for a while, for the atom bomb was such a modern thing. I do not mean just that it was expensive, technologically elegant, and an overwhelming demonstration of mathematical physics; or just that it was bound up with "wargasms" and all the strange destructive sexuality of modern times; or even just that it was modernity's last sick attempt to master nature. I mean that the atom bomb hid from us the ending going on all around us, and that far from destroying modern times, the atom bomb kept modern times alive for nearly fifty years. The threat of global nuclear destruction made the eschaton intelligible. All those good-hearted people who demonstrated outside nuclear bases, who signed petitions and held parades—all of them knew why they felt so close to the edge, and all of them knew why their dreams were filled with visions of the world's end. They had someone to blame; they had an explanation—the sort of explanation modernity had always promised we would have: rational, true, and morally convincing.

But with the diminished threat of nuclear destruction, the eschaton has slipped its leash. The ending all around us has no logos and no science. There is no one to blame, no explanation, and no knowledge. Modern times is collapsing, and all we have left are ironic juxtapositions: looters with cellular telephones, Van Gogh paintings in insurance company boardrooms, crucifixes in vials of urine.

Or, rather, for the modern man and modern woman there is no explanation (though perhaps environmental pollution now replaces the atom bomb in the fully modern eschatology). But to be a Christian is always to have known, in some way, that it would come to this: that there must be a retribution, that the modern atheistic project was corrupt from its beginning, that the godless present age embraces self-destruction and is doomed to be destroyed.

We were all of us raised as moderns, however, and even as I write these words, my own modernness rises up to make me blush. To speak about doom and retribution, about the godless present age, is to sound distinctly premodern, distinctly dated, distinctly benighted and reactionary. It is to sound like the antihumanistic enemy against whom modernity has campaigned for three hundred years. And I ought to blush, for I profit fully from the modern. I drive my car, keep iced tea in my refrigerator, get my vaccinations, use my computer, turn on my air conditioner in the summer heat.

Suppose, however, that we were nonetheless to declare ourselves against modernity. Suppose we were with wild eyes to denounce the present age, and trumpet doom and retribution through the streets of our cities: brand-new Savonarolas burning brand-new vanities. The state would send armored tanks to take our children, and we would seem no more than madmen filmed by TV crews for the evening news. Or suppose we were to withdraw from the irony of being Christians in these late times and build our medieval communes in the woods. Still the state would come to vaccinate our children, and tourists would come for photographs. No, these are distasteful options, and ineffective anyway. Rebels are bound to that against which they rebel, and were we to rebel against the modern we would find in our anachro-

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nisms no positive past, but only a negated present. More, it is in rebellion against the modern that we would find ourselves most truly modern—extra-modern, hyper-modern. Modernity is shaped by its deliberate rejection of the past, and modernity itself is our past. We cannot revert to the premodern, we cannot return to the age of faith, for we were all of us raised as moderns.

And yet, though we cannot revert, we nonetheless have resources that may help us to advance beyond these late times. The modern project that attacked the Middle Ages has itself been under attack for some time. For some time, hyper-modern writers have brought to bear against their modern past the same sort of scarifying analysis that earlier modern writers brought against the premodern past. These later writers, supposing the modern destruction of God to be complete, have turned their postmodern attacks upon the modern project of Enlightenment rationality.

In some sense, of course, these words premodern, modern, and postmodern are too slippery to mean much. Taken to refer to the history of ideas, they seem to name the periods before, during, and after the Enlightenment; but taken to refer to the history of events, they seem to name the period from creation to the rise of science, the period from the rise of science until World War II, and the period since the war. It is tempting to define the categories philosophically, rather than historically, around the recognition that knowledge depends upon the existence of God. But the better modern philosophers (e.g., Descartes and Kant, as opposed to, say, Voltaire) recognize that dependence in some way or another. Perhaps, though definitions based on intent are always weak, the best definition nonetheless involves intent: it is premodern to seek beyond rational knowledge for God; it is modern to desire to hold knowledge in the structures of human rationality (with or without God); it is postmodern to see the impossibility of such knowledge.

There is thus a curious parallel of thought between premodern thinkers and postmodern prophets of modernity's destruction. This parallel could be drawn precisely, I think, between the medieval Christian neoplatonists (Dionysius, Eriugena, St. Bonaventure, Eckhart, Cusa) and certain contemporary critics of systematic rationality (Derrida, Foucault, Jameson). But *all* medievals, even such "rational" philosophers as Averroes, Moses Maimonides, and St. Thomas Aquinas, share certain philosophical ideas that are closer to the postmodern than the modern. The premoderns said that without God, there would be no knowledge, and the postmoderns say we have no God and have no knowledge. The premoderns said that without the purposefulness of final causation, all things would be equally valueless, and the postmoderns say there is no purpose and no value. The premoderns said that without an identity of reality and the Good, there would be no right and wrong, and the postmoderns say there is neither Good nor right and wrong. Though they disagree on whether God exists, premoderns and postmoderns share the major premise that knowing requires His existence. Only for a brief period in the history of the West—the period of modern times—did anyone seriously suppose that human beings could hold knowledge without God.

By itself, this parallel between premodern and postmodern does us no good, for we cannot use it to return to the age of faith. Postmodernity is still in the line of modernity, as rebellion against rebellion is still rebellion, as an attack on the constraints of grammar must still be written in grammatical sentences, as a skeptical argument against the structures of rationality must still be put rationally. Our conceptions of the premodern and the postmodern turn equally on the modern project. Though the postmodern attack on modernity may move our historical imagination to a periphery from which to view the center, it does not remove us from the circle. The failure of the present age is not cured by recognizing it as failing. We need, rather, a different center in order to hold knowledge.

II

I choose the phrase "to hold knowledge" deliberately, for the massive scientific advance of modernity reveals how easy it is to *discover* facts, and modernity's collapse reveals how hard it is to *hold* knowledge. We have an apparatus for discovery unrivaled by the ages, yet every new fact means less than the previously discovered one, for we lack what turns facts to knowledge: the information of what the facts are for.

Epistemology, the branch of philosophy that studies how we know, gives us a technical vocabulary with which to describe this missing piece of information. Aristotle originally describes knowledge as a grasp of cause and essence: to know a thing, we must know the four causes of its existence and the essential genus and difference of its species. He discovers, however, that the fourth of the causes—the final cause, "that for the sake of which"—is already enfolded in the essence itself. The fullest knowledge of a being is thus, in Aristotle's description, a grasp of what that being is for. When Francis Bacon and all the other founders of modern science reject final causation, they reject the entire idea of essence: the "beingness" of knowable things.

Yet while epistemology may give us a name for the missing information, it fails to give us a way to demonstrate the necessity for this information. The technical reason for epistemology's failure is the impossibility of forming a strict genus-and-difference definition of knowledge. Certainly we can define the psychology of knowing, but a definition of the logical content of that knowing soon becomes circular: the act of knowing may belong to the genus of mental

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acts, but we have no genus for the knowledge thereby known.

It might seem, however, that we do not need to enter into the technicalities of epistemology in order to see the necessity of final causation for knowledge, but we could discover this necessity by examining history instead. As Etienne Gilson once observed, history is the only laboratory we have in which to see the consequences of thought. The empty pit into which the modern project has fallen may well reveal Bacon's failure far more convincingly than any purely epistemological argument ever could. This is the reason, as I understand it, that Michel Foucault pressed his postmodern attack on modernity by writing histories. The Foucault by whom we are first moved to question modernity, the Foucault by whom we are first shown the absurdity of the modern project from its beginning, is not the Foucault of the epistemological *Order of Things* and *Archaeology of Knowledge,* but the Foucault of the historical *Discipline and Punish, Madness and Civilization,* and *Birth of the Clinic.* To read these histories is to see the evil of the systematic, the cruelty of impersonal human ingenuity, and the prison of the Enlightenment's constraining rationality.

But the history of thought is finally about thought rather than history. The failure of the modern project is a failure of theory, not just practice, and so Foucault wrote epistemology, not just history. Historical studies may point us towards the source of modernity's collapse, but they do not prove it. We would need, of course, a large book to cover accurately and fairly the thousand shades of modern epistemology, and another large book to demonstrate their failure, and yet another to propose an alternative. Once historical studies have pointed us in the right direction, however, it is actually quite easy to sketch (in a very loose and general way) the epistemological absurdity of the attempt to found knowledge without the transcendental final cause that is God.

To the medieval eye, beings disclose their purposes precisely as they imitate God. God moves things as their final cause: the aim of their growth and motion, the object of their desire. Everything is thus an image of God, for the perfection of a thing would be to be God. "He is Himself the proper type of each," writes St. Thomas. "The divine essence contains in itself the excellences of all beings, not indeed by way of composition, but by way of perfection." Even in their imperfections things reveal the hidden Exemplar of their being. The consequence of this medieval view is that objects of knowledge seem simultaneously real and unreal. They have, enfolded in their presence, an absence that makes them knowable. When we see a face reflected in a mirror, we recognize not only that the reflection is a real reflection, but also that it is not a real face. Similarly, images are real as images, but not real as that of which they are the image. For medieval men and women, knowable things have the strange dual status of being really existing images. But this is what allows them to be known: insofar as they are images, there is something *knowable* there; insofar as they really exist, there is something knowable *there.*

Francis Bacon's rejection of purpose, however, is also a rejection of lack. The modern scientist sees the objects of investigation as complete, lacking nothing, wholly what they are. Things are real here before us, and have no absence that requires God. The imagination as an image-former (rather than an image-reader) is the proper faculty of human knowing. Facing fully real things, *we* render them knowable in the images of language, art, and mathematical science. As an attempt to found an epistemology, this is bizarre. The logic of knowing tells us that we must abandon any claim to have complete knowledge of whatever it is we have taken as fully real. Between us and whatever is real, a gap opens up. We may discern, perhaps, *that* the real is, but *what* it is (its essential "beingness") retreats behind the impossibility of knowing its purpose. The consequence of this modern view is that things are not what they are said to be. Any time a modern tells us *what* something is, we are told more about language and its speaker than about the thing of which that speaker speaks, and we ought to recognize the speaker's hunger for power and desire for domination. Any modern use of essences is philosophically unjustifiable: an attempt to force a unique unknowable individual into a controlled category of knowledge.

And so "we must learn to live after truth," as a group of European academics wrote in *After Truth: A Postmodern Manifesto.* "Nothing is certain, not even this. . . . The modern age opened with the destruction of God and religion. It is ending with the threatened destruction of all coherent thought." Nietzsche may have been the first to see this clearly, though the Marquis de Sade came close in *Philosophy in the Bedroom.* But, even in the fundamental thinkers of high modernity, hints can be found that knowledge requires God: Descartes uses God in the *Meditations* in order to escape from the interiority where the *cogito* has stranded him; Kant uses God as a postulate of pure practical reason in order to hold on to the possibility of morality.

III

And yet I am convinced that any attempt to "use" God is self-defeating, and that the very appearance of an epistemologically useful God in the writings of Descartes and Kant contributes to the Death of God described by Nietzsche, and thus to the collapse of knowledge. (This point is made brilliantly by Jean-Luc Marion in *God Without Being.*) Thanks to the postmodern critique, we can see this collapse with historical clarity; but the fact of our seeing it

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does not give us God. In the real psychology of conversion, no one comes to believe merely for the sake of guaranteeing knowledge. This has an analogue in the theological realization that God is not mastered by the thought of Him, but discovered by thought to be beyond thought: He is silent where thought most needs Him to speak. And it has an analogue in the epistemological realization that the Divine defeats knowledge for the sake of which we suppose the Divine: God (posited as a transcendental condition for the possibility of knowing) must Himself be unknowable—else we would need to posit some further God as the condition for the possibility of knowing Him. And it has its most accurate analogue in the historical realization that we are not premoderns: we cannot cease to be moderns by rebelling against modernity.

But this leaves us in a perilous position. On the one hand, without an unthinkable God who illuminates thinking, we cannot maintain knowledge. On the other hand, the desire to maintain knowledge will not conjure the God who reveals Himself only to faith. The ceremonies of suspicion, in which we have all been trained since Descartes, make falling to a postmodern denial of knowledge easier than climbing to an un-modern belief.

What believers have in common with postmoderns is a distrust of modern claims to knowledge. To be a believer, however, is to be subject to an attack that postmoderns, holding truthlessness to themselves like a lover, never have to face. The history of modernity in the West is in many ways nothing more than the effort to destroy medieval faith. It is a three-hundred-year attempt to demolish medieval (especially Catholic) claims to authority, and to substitute a structure of science and ethics based solely on human rationality. But with the failure to discover any such rational structure—seen by the postmoderns—the only portion of the modern project still available to a modern is the destruction of faith. It should not surprise us that, in very recent times, attacks on what little is left of medieval belief have become more outrageous: resurgent anti-Semitism, anti-Islamic broadsides, vicious mockery of evangelical preaching, desecrations of the Host in Catholic masses. For modern men and women, nothing else remains of the high moral project of modernity: these attacks are the only good thing left to do. The attackers are convinced of the morality of their attack not by the certainty of their aims—who's to say what's right or wrong?—but by opposition from believers.

Three hundred years of this attack have created in believers an attitude both deeply defensive and deeply conservative. But the defensiveness springs from the attempt by believers to defend their belief against a "progressive" philosophy that is already rejected intellectually by nearly all cultural commentators, and, I suspect, despised intuitively by nearly all young people in America. Believers should not become entangled in the defense of modern times. This is the key—the postmodern attack on modernity is right: without God, essences are the will to power. Without God, every attempt to call something true or beautiful or good is actually an attempt to compel other people to agree.

Of course believers are tempted, when they hear postmodern deconstructions of modernity, to argue in support of modernity. After all, believers share with modern nonbelievers a trust in the reality of truth. They affirm the efficacy of human action, the movement of history towards a goal, the possibility of moral and aesthetic judgments. But believers share with postmoderns the recognition that truth rests on a faith that has itself been the sole subject of the long attack of modern times. The most foolish thing believers could do is to make concessions now to a modernity that is already bankrupt (and that despises them anyway) and thus to make themselves subject to a second attack—the attack of the postmodern on the modern. Faithful believers are not responsible for the emptiness of modernity. They struggled against it for as long as they could, and they must not give in now. They must not, at this late date, become scientific, bureaucratic, and technological; skeptical, self-conscious, and self-mocking.

IV

At the same time we ought to be wary of the immediate practical effect of making common cause with the postmodern. For instance, an attempt to root out modern elements in the Church ought to be viewed with the same suspicion we should have for any systematic program of destruction. Nothing in the rejection of modernity tells us how we ought to view the ecumenical movement or the ordination of women. A postmodern critique of the Catholic Church would find less grist in current controversies than in modern elements already present in the Church: the substituted vernacular mass, or the presence of national flags on church daises. The problem for the Catholic believer in particular is precisely the claim of the Catholic Church to be a catholic church—not a culture or a heritage, but the mystical bride of Christ—a universal and eternal possibility for conversion. It cannot relegate itself to a self-consciously historical role as some gracefully surviving anachronism, some museum of dead forms. The Church militant must somehow be simultaneously historical and ahistorical. However, the problem for every believer, Catholic or not, is the impossibility of choosing to cease being modern. We cannot *decide* to revert to a community of faith, because the decision requires a self-consciousness that contradicts the unself-consciousness of such community. Any rejection of modernity must step gingerly around this contradiction.

Similarly, we ought to be wary of the theological

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effect of the postmodern. Certainly no one actually believes for the sake of knowing, or holds irrational faith for the sake of holding rational thought. But the postmodern critique of modernity tempts us to reject rationality rather than surpass it. The relation of Christianity to rationality is, at one extreme, St. Justin Martyr's claim, "Whatever things are rightly said among all men are the property of us Christians," and, at the other extreme, Tertullian's question, "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" If the tendency of contemporary theology is to give too much to Justin and the efficacy of rational thought, the tendency of postmodern theology is to give too much to Tertullian and the irrational.

But there is perhaps a use we might make of the postmodern in apologetics, for the collapse of modernity may allow believers to speak once again about God without defensiveness or self-consciousness, may allow believers both to escape political categorization as liberal or conservative and to escape the modern view that sees political categories as fundamental. And there is certainly a use for the postmodern in catechetics. The critique of modernity offers the possibility of reclaiming the long history of belief, the possibility of critically reading medieval authors without supposing them to be involved in the attempt to master God.

St. Anselm, for instance, puts in his *Proslogion* what a typically modern reading takes as the "ontological argument": an attempt to prove, by examining the meaning of the word "God," the existence of a useful transcendental guarantor of thought, whose existence is itself guaranteed by thought. And Anselm seems to invite this sort of separation of the logical argument from its place in his text. He had long sought, he writes, an argument that "would suffice to demonstrate that God truly exists" and grant understanding superior to faith: "I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand." Indeed, Anselm gave the title *Faith Seeking Understanding* to early drafts of the *Proslogion*. Many thinkers—Gaunilo, St. Thomas, Caterus, Kant, Russell—have pointed to certain logical difficulties with Anselm's demonstration. But we are not committed to resolving these logical difficulties merely by asserting that the modern reading is wrong. Rather, there is opened for us a different way of reading Anselm. The *Proslogion* has more the structure of prayer than the structure of proof: it begins in the blind depths of unilluminated incomprehension; it ends in worship of the blinding Light. Anselm does not seek as a modern to guarantee knowledge, he seeks as a premodern for the God beyond the guarantee.

Similarly, St. Thomas Aquinas puts in the *Summa Theologica* his famous Five Ways. A typically modern reading, whether by a believer or a nonbeliever, takes these Ways as five separable attempts to demonstrate the existence of God. St. Thomas sets out, according to this sort of reading, to prove the "God of the Philosophers": a transcendental guarantor of thought, onto Whose demonstrable features (Prime Mover, Most Necessary Being, Designer of the Universe, etc.) may be super-added the additional features held by faith (appearing in the Burning Bush, descending in the flesh, speaking to Muhammad, etc.). For the modern believer and nonbeliever alike, there is an unconvincingness about such demonstrations that has little to do with their logic. We *know* that the existence of God cannot be proven. We come prejudiced against the possibility of demonstration, and are suspicious even where we find no flaw. And we are right to be suspicious. Modern debates about the existence of God are primarily about whether or not a "useful" God is necessary to guarantee the possibility of ethical action. Both sides in the debate take as fundamental that the moral order stands outside of God, and that the God about Whom they argue would operate as a guarantor of that order if He existed. To such debates St. Thomas contributes nothing. A world of interpretation is opened to us when we consider instead that Thomas is not concerned with God's guarantee of knowledge (though he notices it in passing), but with moving through thought to the unthinkable. The purpose of the premodern Five Ways is not to settle us in modern knowledge, but to move us toward God.

This, of course, is the greatest use for the postmodern. Though we cannot revert to the premodern community of faith, we can reestablish our communion with that community. Modernity was the effort to destroy the claims of the medieval church to authority in order to put its own conceptions of human rationality at the center of human thought. And it is the mocking deconstructive critique of the postmoderns that shows the bankruptcy and the will to power of modern times. Freed from modernity, we can resume faith's interrupted search for understanding. FT

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Books In Review

The Big Lie Continued

Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory. By Deborah Lipstadt. *Free Press. 278 pp. $22.95.*

Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust. By Pierre Vidal-Naquet. Translated with a Foreword by Jeffrey Mehlman. *Columbia University Press. 205 pp. $27.50.*

Reviewed by **Matthew Berke**

Ever since the end of World War II there have been people who deny, or at least minimize, the enormous crimes of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. The most outrageous claim by these deniers—or "revisionists," as they style themselves—is that there never was a Holocaust (or Shoah) in which six million Jews were systematically murdered by the Nazis. The event often regarded as the very symbol of evil in our time simply didn't happen, they say. The whole story of gas chambers and crematoria is pure fiction, a gigantic hoax, a myth, a vicious fraud invented by World Jewry in order to gain financial reparations from Germany and global sympathy for the state of Israel. The Allied powers collaborated in this Jewish conspiracy in order to divert attention from their own aggressive intentions and wartime atrocities against the Germans.

Until recently, scholars and Jewish organizations practiced a discreet silence toward the deniers, on the theory that responding in effect concedes a certain stature and seriousness to their claims. The historical record of the Holocaust is so immense and, in its main features, so incontrovertible that anyone honestly researching the subject will quickly discover the utter falsehood, absurdity, and bad faith of the deniers' account. Therefore (the thinking went), let the crackpots and deceivers do their fulminating in the fever swamps of the far, far, far right.

Such an approach is no longer possible, however, because over the last decade or so Holocaust deniers have managed to be heard beyond the lunatic fringe. Now and then they have been able to worm their way onto a TV or radio talk show, or to air their views in courtrooms and publicity stunts, or to place ads (and sometimes even get reviews) in college newspapers and professional historical journals. No longer simply producing easily dismissable screeds on cheap paper for certified bigots, Holocaust deniers have developed increasingly sophisticated methods of tailoring their message to different audiences and presenting what may, at first, seem a respectable array of institutions and scholarly publications. Though they remain (for now) comfortably out of the mainstream, deniers have been able to cast doubt and uncertainty among credulous and uninformed people. Some prominent figures—French politician Jean-Marie Le Pen and columnist/presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan, for instance—have given Holocaust revisionism a major boost simply by making reference, albeit in a slyly noncommittal fashion, to some of its claims.

In light of these developments, a number of books have appeared recently to refute the so-called revisionists. *Denying the Holocaust* by Deborah Lipstadt, a professor at Emory University, provides the most comprehensive guide to the people, organizations, and ideas associated with Holocaust denial. *Assassins of Memory* by Pierre Vidal-Naquet, a French classicist, contains shrewd and learned dissections of the denial literature, with special attention to its rhetorical devices and deceptions. Neither author regards the story of the Holocaust as sacred history or martyrology that is exempt from revisions that naturally occur in the light of new evidence and arguments—nor, they point out, have reputable historians treated it as such. (The figure of six million, for instance, is legitimately open to question: it might be somewhat less—or more.) But as both texts make clear, all writers currently adopting the brand name "Holocaust revisionism" defy or corrupt the recognized canons of historiographic investigation and truth; they distort and manipulate the historical record to create usable falsehoods that can advance the agenda of "an extreme right-wing that sees itself as heir to Nazism and dreams of its rehabilitation" (Vidal-Naquet). For those unfamiliar with the actual facts, but curious as to whether there is perhaps some portion or fragment of truth in "Holocaust revisionism," Deborah Lipstadt's patient and measured account, supplemented by Vidal-Naquet's withering critiques, should put such suspicions to rest.

Lipstadt's early chapters are taken up with a review of the antecedents of contemporary Holocaust denial, beginning with the revisionist history of the 1920s and 30s that sought to absolve Germany of guilt for starting World War I. One leading member of that revisionist school, the American historian Harry Elmer Barnes (of Smith, Columbia, and the New School for Social Research), went on to oppose American intervention in the thirties and to justify German policies even after the war. In later years, Holocaust deniers would embrace Barnes as a kind of mentor and Barnes in turn eventually embraced them.

The first major public denials of the Holocaust began in the late 1940s, with the writings of a Frenchman named Paul Rassinier ("the true father of contemporary revisionism," as Vidal-Naquet describes him). A former Communist and Socialist who became an unvarnished anti-Semite and Nazi sympathizer, Rassinier did not initially deny the existence of death camps and gas

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chambers, but he claimed that the number of Jewish victims was hugely exaggerated, and that most of these were in fact murdered by other Jewish inmates who had been given authority within the camps. In any case, he argued, the Jews, as implacable enemies of the German people, got what they deserved. Throughout the fifties and sixties, deniers followed the Rassinier lead, producing pamphlets and articles mainly for consumption within their own ranks, i.e., fascist and anti-Semitic groups on both sides of the Atlantic. Such literature was limited in its appeal partly because of its undisguised racism, and partly because of its contrived and contradictory character. (Some, for instance, said that the putative victims of the Nazis were really living in Russia, while others placed the bulk of them in Israel—or in Manhattan.)

A FULL-FLEDGED "revisionism" did not emerge until the 1970s with the publication of three key works: Austin J. App's pamphlet *The Six Million Swindle* (1973), whose very title, Lipstadt observes, "links . . . Holocaust hoax arguments to traditional anti-Semitic imagery" of Jewish chicanery, deception, and manipulation; *Did Six Million Really Die?* (1974), a widely circulated twenty-eight page pamphlet by Richard Harwood, the pseudonym for Richard Verrall, editor of *Spearhead*, a publication of Britain's neo-Nazi organization, the National Front; and finally, a book-length treatment with footnotes and citations, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (1977) by Arthur L. Butz, a professor of electrical engineering at Northwestern University. The Butz book, says Lipstadt, with its "veneer of scholarship and the impression of seriousness and objectivity," set the standard for future deniers and won major media attention in the U.S., including articles in the *New York Times*, thereby establishing Holocaust denial/revisionism as a public phenomenon.

As the deniers crystallized their story they also began to consolidate institutionally, largely through the efforts of one Willis Carto, often cited as America's leading anti-Semite and Nazi apologist. In 1978 Carto founded the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), a Los Angeles-based clearinghouse for Holocaust denial and other agitprop blaming the Jews (and to some extent the United States) for most of history's wars and depressions. IHR's publication, the *Journal of Historical Review*, followed the Butz model in its own articles, blending apparent objectivity and scholarly protocols (footnotes, quotes, tactical concessions, etc.) with occasional outbursts of rhetorical bluster and anti-Semitic invective. By coordinating the efforts of the Institute and *Journal* with his other organizations—the far-right Liberty Lobby, the Noontide Press, *American Mercury* magazine, and the newsletter *Spotlight*—Carto established a kind of anti-Semitism/Holocaust denial conglomerate. Lipstadt writes:

> The basic assertions—which were eventually adopted by the Institute for Historical Review as well as other revisionist groups as the fundamental tenets of Holocaust denial—fall into three distinct categories. First, they absolve the Nazis by arguing that they never had any plan for annihilating Jews and that the means supposedly used for annihilation were technologically impossible. They only wanted Jews to emigrate, and if any Jews did die it was the USSR that was ultimately responsible. Second, they legitimate the killing of those Jews who died by contending that they were killed for justifiable reasons. Third, they blame the perpetuation of this hoax on Israel and Jewish leaders and scholars, all of whom have material interests in its dissemination.

DENIERS frequently say there is no evidence or documentatary proof for the Holocaust. But, as Lipstadt points out, there is in fact a vast store of documentation (much of which she cites or quotes): public and private statements by the Nazi leadership about the extermination of the Jews; records and orders from the German government and military for the construction and use of gas chambers, and for the transportation of victim populations; diaries and eyewitness accounts from Holocaust perpetrators, survivors, and third parties; testimony of Nazi officials at the Nuremburg war crimes trials (testimony never recanted, incidentally, either by those who were sentenced to death or by those spared execution); photographic and film documentation of mass murder; the whole history of Nazi anti-Semitism which, throughout the twenties and thirties, spoke of Jews as insects and vermin in need of extermination.

How do the deniers get around such overwhelming evidence? Deniers, as both Lipstadt and Vidal-Naquet show, seem to have an endless supply of polemical tricks and dodges: they simply discount Jewish testimony out of hand as lie or fantasy; inculpatory testimony from the Nazis themselves is said to have been coerced by the triumphant Allies; documents confirming such testimony are said to be forgeries; Nazi statements and memoranda about the Final Solution are taken at face value if they are euphemistically phrased, but are interpreted as hyperbolic or figurative if they are blunt and explicit; photographs and films of executions are dismissed as fakes. Even mountains of corpses and emaciated, half-dead survivors prove nothing for the deniers, who say simply that these are unfortunate victims of typhus or cholera epidemics. And so forth.

Such an enormous conspiracy might seem to stretch the credulity of even the deepest paranoia about Jewish cunning and omnipotence, requiring as it does a seamless coordination of testimony from many different (often opposing) governments and agencies, plus thousands, indeed tens of thousands, of people far-flung geographically and separated by an enormous diversity of in-

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terests, purposes, and perspectives. If such an unimaginable project had been accomplished, then, as Lipstadt says, "one could legitimately expect a powerful force like 'World Jewry' to have seen to it that no discrepancies were allowed to creep into research by Jewish scholars" and others; moreover, amidst the mountains of supposedly forged documents, surely the conspirators would have placed a paper with Hitler's signature beneath an order to exterminate Europe's Jews.

STILL, deniers work the edges of the story, picking out the inevitable contradictions (or appearances of contradiction) produced by a large and complex event such as the Holocaust, trying to give the impression of unravelling the whole story by tugging on a few loose threads. If even one detail can be disproved, perhaps the whole story can at least be put in doubt. As with thieves trying various doors, anything is fair game for the deniers' purposes. Some years ago (to take just one example), European deniers caused a storm of publicity by contesting the authenticity of *Anne Frank's Diary*. Among other things, they claimed to have scientific and technical evidence that the ink used in the original manuscript was not available until 1951, years after the war ended. The various charges were repeated so widely that finally, in 1980, the Dutch government began a massive investigation. In the end, forensic experts reported that the diaries were, beyond doubt, written by one person, that editing was extremely limited in nature—e.g., punctuation, a few words here and there—and that the paper, glue, fibers in the binding, and ink were all in use in the 1940s. "While some may argue that the Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation used an elephant to swat a fly," Lipstadt says, "once again it becomes clear that the deniers' claims have no relationship to the most basic rules of truth and evidence."

Some deniers, Lipstadt indicates, have tried to peddle "the notion that it was technically and physically impossible for the gas chambers at Auschwitz to have functioned as extermination facilities," whether because of their construction or because of the gas that was used (prussic acid, more commonly known as Zyklon-B). A French denier, Robert Faurisson, inaugurated these technical speculations, though it was Fred Leuchter, an American entrepreneur dealing in execution equipment for states with the death penalty, who provided Faurisson's theories with elaborate displays of pseudoscientific "proof" in *The Leuchter Report: The End of a Myth: An Engineering Report on the Alleged Execution Gas Chambers at Auschwitz, Birkenau, and*

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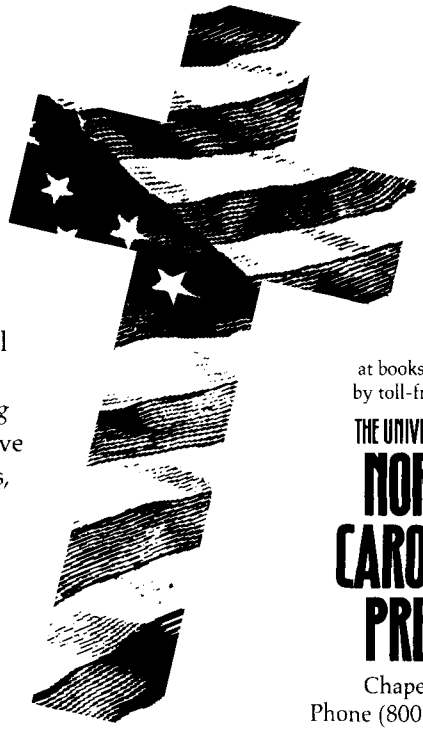

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Majdenek (1988). The findings of this report were subsequently discredited, as was Leuchter's claim to be an "engineer." A Boston court trial revealed that Leuchter had no credentials whatever in engineering (or chemistry, toxicology, or any of the disciplines relevant to his report) and he was ordered to refrain from fraudulently pretending to possess them. Jean-Claude Pressac, a French pharmacist and would-be denier who was for a time involved with Faurisson and Leuchter, repudiated the whole project when he saw its blatant mendacity. (Late last fall, Pressac published his own book, *The Auschwitz Crematoria: The Machinery of Mass Slaughter*, refuting the deniers' technological disinformation.)

One can go on and on listing the deniers' intellectual outrages: wholecloth lies are intermingled with half-truths, statistics are manipulated, quotations are taken out of context to give them the opposite of their original meanings, and so forth. Lipstadt and Vidal-Naquet do a good job of cataloging and refuting the principle claims and techniques of the deniers. They confess, though, that it would take an encyclopedia to respond to each and every falsehood and specious argument. Vidal-Naquet remarks (with specific reference to Butz's *Hoax of the Twentieth Century* though with application to denial literature in general) that it is "possible, of course, even easy" to refute them, "assuming one knew the archives, but it would be long and tedious . . . [and] to demolish a discourse takes time and space. When a fictitious account is well prepared, it dies not contain elements allowing one to detroy it on strictly internal grounds."

THIS OBSERVATION goes to the heart of the deniers' strategy: make the charges, no matter how ludicrous; force legitimate scholars to refute them; repeat the charges even after they have been disproved, since few people have the time, inclination, or ability to study the matter—they are left simply to believe that there is "some question" or "controversy" about the matter. In this way (it has been observed), new lies do not replace old discredited ones but simply accumulate. Students of the old Soviet propaganda machine will see familiarities between Holocaust deniers and the KGB, though of course the deniers lack a broad network of "moles," fellow-travelers, and dupes within the establishment media.

Lipstadt argues against outright suppression or censorship of the deniers. The idea of "hate speech" is too vague, and preventing the dissemination of "false news" is a legal impossibility. Persecuting the deniers would only give them the publicity that they desire and need, maybe even make them into martyrs or folk heroes. At the same time, Lipstadt insists that the press and mass media should consciously and deliberately deny access to the deniers. Against some fuzzy-minded liberals, she argues persuasively that such action does *not* constitute a form of blacklisting in violation of the First Amendment: deniers may have a right to spread their word as best they can, but a newspaper (for instance) is under no obligation to open its pages for the rehearsal of claims whose falsehood and malice have repeatedly been demonstrated. Lipstadt insists, wisely, that no scholar or survivor should engage deniers in debates or other public forums, since this would only give the impression that, whatever the final judgment, Holocaust denial represents a legitimate point of view. Bradley R. Smith of the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH) has sought to gain legitimacy for deniers in precisely this way, presenting "Holocaust revisionists" as an unjustly persecuted group of dissenters who simply want to get a fair hearing. Vidal-Naquet's reply to Robert Faurisson applies with equal validity to Bradley Smith: "We do not 'debate' him; we demonstrate the mechanisms of his lies, which may be methodologically useful for the younger generations."

And that, basically, is where matters stand. The denial movement has become too big simply to ignore, hoping that without publicity it "will wither on the vine." Therefore it is necessary, as Vidal-Naquet says, to demonstate the deniers' lies, and to put the truth on record, particularly as the generation of Holocaust survivors and witnesses passes away. One may certainly refrain from insisting, as some Jewish leaders have, upon mandated Holocaust studies in the public school curriculum: for many people, such "mandates" might appear as an effort to establish the passion of the Jews as the larger culture's defining story, thus, ironically, giving plausibility to anti-Semitic claims about Jewish power. Holocaust museums and memorials, insofar as they avoid the appearance of manipulative intent, may have a positive role in combatting the deniers. But for now at least, the real work seems to be in maintaining the isolation of deniers from respectable forums, and in setting the record straight as much as possible. Vidal-Naquet summarizes the situation well:

> Plainly, we will have to come to terms with the fact that the world has its Faurissons, as it has its pimps and its pornographic film clubs. But there can be no question of yielding any ground to him. . . . What is needed is a ceaseless work, the establishment of facts, not for those who know them and who are about to disappear, but for those who are legitimately demanding as to the quality of the evidence.

It is difficult to imagine the deniers gaining a major following unless there is some major upheaval and rending of the social fabric. Of course, that possibility gives special poignance to Vidal-Naquet's concluding words: "Will truth have the last word? How one would like to be sure of it . . ."

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Anti-Antiliberalism

The Anatomy of Antiliberalism. By Stephen Holmes. *Harvard University Press. 330 pp. $29.95.*

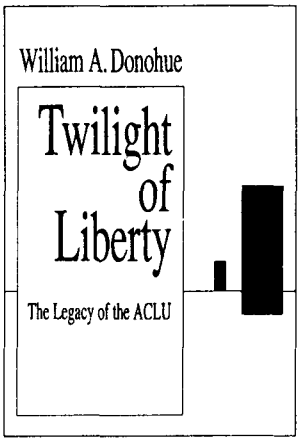
Reviewed by **Mark C. Henrie**

As the 1990s bring us the recrudescence of many unfulfilled progressive enthusiasms from the 1970s, we may begin to understand that the intervening Reagan decade was indeed an exceptional period of American political and intellectual life. With that rhetorically gifted President setting the cultural tone, public men retreated headlong from programs tainted with "the L-word." Above the political fray, meanwhile, a diverse band of "communitarians" rigorously challenged liberal political and moral theories. Liberalism was accused of atomizing society into a collection of anomic individuals, and of promoting secularism, materialism, and various other isms understood to be the pathologies of modernity. Indeed, liberalism was found to undermine the conditions necessary for genuine friendship and for the moral life. Surprisingly, unlike the conservatives who originally espoused many of these views, the communitarians were attended to respectfully by many academic spokesmen for liberalism.

Stephen Holmes' book is a response to this new intellectual strain of arguments against liberalism. The book begins with a series of chapters analyzing what he takes to be a representative sample of "antiliberal" thinkers: the dark genius of the Counter-Enlightenment, Joseph de Maistre; Carl Schmitt, the German constitutional theorist implicated in the Third Reich; the German-born Jewish historian of ideas, Leo Strauss; historian Christopher Lasch; Catholic moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre; and Roberto Unger, a radical legal theorist at Harvard. Holmes wants to demonstrate that for all their differences, these men belong to a single "antiliberal tradition," a tradition dangerously wrong in its understanding of political life. His purpose is to vindicate the liberal tradition—from Locke and Montesquieu to Madison and Mill—and refute the erroneous arguments of the antiliberals. Holmes engages his subject intelligently and artfully, but in the end his own attitudes underline the cogency of many elements in the antiliberal argument.

Holmes' fairness in his account of his antagonists is immediately called into question by his decision to begin with Maistre and Schmitt. For Maistre—one of the greatest stylists in the French language—a veritable anti-Voltaire, could never resist the temptation to *épater les bourgeoisie*; his writing is filled with provoca-

Mark C. Henrie *is a doctoral candidate in political theory at Harvard University.*



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tive, extremist aphorisms. Maistre is also maddeningly complex, with some of his darkest thoughts appearing in works published only after his death. Yet Holmes builds his case primarily on these posthumous works. To claim this singular thinker as the fount of any tradition is dubious in itself. Nor does Holmes ever actually argue that his subjects can be said to have influenced one another; "guilt" is simply inferred from ideological affinity. Schmitt's prominent place in Holmes' antiliberal canon, on the other hand, directly confronts us with the suggestion that antiliberalism is essentially linked with fascism. And this takes us to the heart of Holmes' project.

HOLMES repeatedly claims he is not trying to identify contemporary antiliberalism—the communitarians—with fascism, but the claim is disingenuous. He does distinguish between "hard" and "soft" antiliberals, but it happens that the three deceased antiliberals he discusses are all "hard" while his three living specimens are all "soft." Holmes clearly intends to present contemporary critics of liberalism with a great decision: either they recognize that their antiliberalism is so "soft" that it amounts to a mere quibble within liberalism, or they persist in their posture of total critique, in which case they must acknowledge fascism as an elder brother; nothing in between is possible. Since he bears them no ill will, Holmes certainly hopes the communitarians will embrace the former option: liberalism will be all in all. This impulse to what we might call liberal totalism arises from Holmes' apparent belief that all true antiliberalisms are vicious, and all true virtues are the property of liberalism.

To attract the communitarians to liberal orthodoxy, then, Holmes denies that liberalism is a complete theory of man that encourages a particular range of virtues and modes of life and rules out others. Instead, he presents liberalism as a minimal set of noncontroversial practices to which no one could reasonably object. He thus directs our attention away from the social criticism at which the antiliberals excel and raises questions about political institutions. In a discussion of MacIntyre, for example, he writes, "Modern liberal societies glorify instrumental relations between human beings, we are told [by MacIntyre], as if the abolition of slavery was a negligible affair." This is Holmes at his best and worst, for while abolition was no small achievement, Holmes must know perfectly well that this is not responsive to MacIntyre's point. In context, this formulation would seem to imply that for Holmes any noninstrumental relation is slavery. Holmes thus reveals a perspective closely resembling that of Hillary Rodham Clinton in her much-criticized discussion of marriage and family life. Such an equation of noninstrumental human relations with slavery reveals precisely the intellectual and moral corruption that the antiliberals argue necessarily arises within liberal society.

Moreover, any list of "liberal" political practices and institutions is controversial. Is equal protection of the laws a liberal practice? Or is it simply a good practice that has been an element of good political theories and regimes through most of Western history? Alternatively, is the abortion license a liberal practice? Is no-fault divorce? If they are, then reasonable men and women can clearly object to liberal practices as much as to liberal theories. On the one hand, we see here that Holmes claims both too much and too little in his account of liberal practices. On the other hand, Holmes stretches credulity when he tries so completely to dissociate liberal practices from any theoretical foundation: has there ever been a political movement as bound up with self-conscious abstract theorizing as liberalism?

IN THE second part of this book Holmes addresses what he takes to be the permanent structure of antiliberal thought, dissecting in turn the charges against liberalism of atomization, moral skepticism, and selfishness that he has uncovered in the writings of the antiliberals. In these chapters he pursues two strategies to defend liberalism. Against those who understand it to be anarchically individualistic and hostile to all authority and to the common good, Holmes argues that liberalism is in fact constructive of community: it is not hostile to authority per se but only to "illegitimate" authority. (This of course begs the highly theoretical and hotly contested question of what constitutes legitimacy.) He argues, moreoever, that if liberal society does coincidentally encourage certain social evils, these are inextricably bound up with the fundamental political goods that liberalism alone has secured; such discrete evils must therefore be tolerated. This line of argument is not original, but it remains the most persuasive defense available to liberalism in the Anglo-American world. Where this defense is open to question is in its boast of liberal uniqueness in securing the indispensable political good of domestic peace.

This question comes to light when Holmes turns to history. Here he protests an antiliberal habit of "antonym substitution," in which original oppositions formulated to further liberal purposes (rights vs. arbitrary rule) are transposed into new contrarieties that place the liberal position in a less flattering light (rights vs. duties). He argues plaintively that such substitutions result in bad history. Without historical context, he says, it becomes impossible to understand the "moral motivation" of the early liberal theorists, who among other things first embraced the idea of individual rights. (At no point, of course, does Holmes address seriously, much less sympathetically, the moral motivation behind the antiliberals' rejection of rights-talk.)

Holmes then repairs to the seventeenth century to provide a context congenial for the defense of liberalism. There, amidst a welter of confusing tendencies and mixed causes, he educes the old story of the struggle between absolutism and parlia-

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mentary government and between obscurantist confessional states and enlightened secular toleration: without liberalism, wars of religion. At one point, Holmes claims that the antiliberal tradition is merely repetitive, never developing. Whether or not this is true, Holmes' own understanding of the liberal tradition seems to amount to an endless repetition of the eighteenth-century charge against the parties in the religious wars of the seventeenth century.

YET BY Holmes' own account, alluding to the *summum malum* of seventeenth-century religious war constitutes a dubious defense of liberalism, for he himself begins the antiliberal tradition with Maistre (1753-1821) rather than with the patriarchalist advocate of hereditary kingship, Robert Filmer (1588-1653), or the champion of the divine right claims of Louis XIV, Bishop Bossue (1627-1704). If context is called for, many antiliberals might well agree that the liberal theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had more convincing arguments than their opponents. That historical judgment says nothing about the disputes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the disputes in which Holmes' antiliberals are engaged. The decisive "argument" for liberalism appears to rest on anachronism.

Returning to the present, Holmes writes that he finds communitarian antiliberalism necessarily dangerous because the group identities celebrated in communitarian theories must be formed by making a "friend-foe" distinction, a term of art from Schmitt. Whether or not this correctly describes the communitarian project, Holmes either fails to understand or refuses to recognize that his own position rests on a friend-foe distinction. His world is radically divided between—liberals and antiliberals. On one side we find reasonable secular cosmopolitans such as Stephen Holmes, and on the other we find everyone else—notably, the "ethnic workers" championed by Christopher Lasch. Holmes doesn't even take the trouble to ask any ethnic workers what they think about political and social questions; he knows a priori that they are given to racism, sexism, and other atavisms. What particularly horrifies him is that such reactionary populations have in the 1980s found theoretical champions from among the liberal classes.

Thus, Holmes might meaningfully be described as an "anti-communitarian," for he often seems positively to loathe the spirit of settled community enjoyed by groups such as the ethnic workers. While he does not seek to destroy his "foe" through violence, he does seem to hope that "irreversible social processes" will eliminate the basis for their *Gemeinschaft* altogether. In the event that the tide of history might fail, liberals like Holmes have resort to (re-)education in the public school monopoly and ultimately to the coercive enforcement of novel individual "rights" against communities that seek to defend their norms through democratic legislation. Holmes emphasizes the priority of practices and political institutions: the *sovereign* political institution for all contemporary liberal theorists is the undemocratic judiciary, that branch of government most completely controlled by those who share a liberal understanding of the good life. A liberalism that has devolved in practice into an oligarchy of those whose values are seriously questioned by the majority of a nation's citizens is eminently deserving of criticism. In fin de siècle America, "antiliberal" voices are needed to remind us that liberal values are themselves dangerously irresponsible unless supported by non-liberal virtues.

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Appropriating the Paradox

THREE DISCOURSES ON IMAGINED OCCASIONS. By SØREN KIERKEGAARD. *Princeton University Press. 181 pp. $39.*

UPBUILDING DISCOURSES IN VARIOUS SPIRITS. By SØREN KIERKEGAARD. *Princeton University Press. 442 pp. $45.*

Reviewed by **Karl Dusza**

KIERKEGAARD presented these two books of discourses to his fellow Danes in 1845 and 1847. In the English language, the discourses were made available some one hundred years later. Now we have them in a fresh translation, published as volumes X and XV of *Kierkegaard's Writings*, a major project under the direction of Howard V. and Edna H. Hong of St. Olaf College and an International Advisory Board to bring out "a definitive, systematically translated, scholarly edition" of Søren Kierkegaard's works. Each volume has an historical introduction and contains selections from Kierkegaard's journals and papers bearing upon the themes—or being

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alternative formulations of the themes—in the published versions of S.K.'s works.

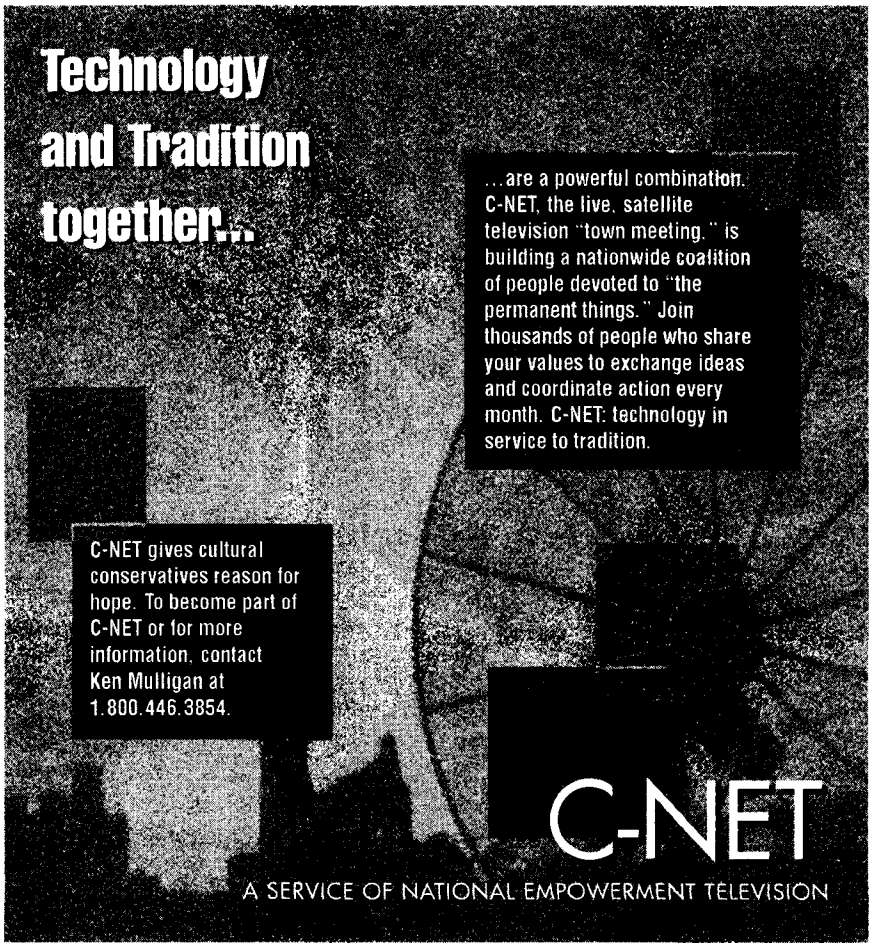
These excerpts are most illuminating, but the reader sometimes feels that more detailed commentaries than the editors/translators provide in their short notes would be helpful. Even so, what is needed for a present-day reading of Kierkegaard is something more important than the crutches professors typically offer to the reader of the works of a genius: an historical introduction that would focus not so much on the circumstances of the inception, but rather on the conditions of the appropriation, of his works. An historical introduction of this kind would have to ask first whether Kierkegaard is still relevant. If the answer is yes, the next step is to inquire whether the conditions for appropriation are given. To put it bluntly, the question is whether we, living in the final decade of the twentieth century, have the patience and the readiness to hear the nineteenth-century Dane out; and hear him out in the way he deemed crucial: to think along and make the content of what he has to say not only the content of our thought, but the content of our lives as well.

HERE I have to propound a paradox (in the ordinary sense of the word). The Kierkegaardian literature has both a striking pertinence and an air of unreality about it. One way to discern the actuality of Kierkegaard's thought is to ponder the following: If the age of Kierkegaard was the age of individualism, is our own not the age of super-individualism? If the age of Kierkegaard was also the age of romanticism, is ours not the age of super-romanticism? And if in a deeper sense Kierkegaard's age was neither that of individualism nor that of romanticism but rather in essence the age of the crowd, what is our own if not the age of the super-crowd? How fortunate for us, then, that this solitary Dane exercised his awesome analytical and rhetorical skills to tear down the veil of deception and uncover the essential folly of his time, and in so doing, bequeathed to us powerful critical tools. He has indeed left us a mirror; peering into it, we can see the folly of our time and glimpse the abyss we are in danger of falling into.

On the other hand, what lends an air of unreality to Kierkegaard's works is that our problems are so much worse than those faced by him and his contemporaries. Kierkegaard lived in what he called "Christendom," a world of superficial, second-hand religiosity, a kind of diluted piousness that in his judgment made a mockery of true Christianity. Kierkegaard's criticism of his age culminated in the measure of the distance that yawned between this Christendom and Christianity. All of Kierkegaard's critical efforts came together in one task: to compel his readers to see the truth, "to make people aware of the essentially Christian."

This he meant to achieve in two phases. First, he would impel people to transcend the "esthetic," the world of immediacy and finitude, to turn inward, and in their inwardness to come in touch with the infinite, the eternal, the true meaning of existence. Then would come the decisive move: to give inwardness the highest possible intensity, which was to bring people to face the Paradox and stake their lives on faith in the Paradox—that God appeared on earth in human form, that the eternal appeared in the temporal, that eternal happiness is based on an historical event. The Paradox is in Kierkegaard's understanding the essentially Christian, and appropriating it as such is the highest degree of religious understanding and belief.

THESE TWO stages of deepening inwardness Kierkegaard calls religiousness A and religiousness B, the religiousness of immanence and the religiousness of transcendence. Religiousness A can in principle be at-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tained even in paganism, since human nature is its only necessary assumption. Nevertheless, to attain religiousness A within the boundaries of one's existence, that is, to be inwardly defined by self-annihilation before God, is already enough of a task. How much more difficult it is, then, for an individual to attain religiousness B, that is, to become a true Christian! In Christianity, immanence recedes, nay, it is consumed, and the individual stands face to face with the Paradox, with the eternal truth that was revealed in time. The individual appropriates the truth by acting on it. This entails his coming into conflict with the world. Thus the corollary: the individual who lives in the truth that is revealed in Christianity must suffer.

When the reader is confronted with the passages that convey this message in Kierkegaard's work, he is likely to think that the philosopher has gone too far. That was the reaction of the few readers S.K. had in his lifetime; a fortiori, are we not profoundly offended by and inclined to wag our heads at the philosopher who demands so much of us? Cynics might be inclined rather to laugh, but their laughter would be bitter. For our world is rapidly receding even from what Kierkegaard called Christendom and is sliding into the kind of paganism where even natural religion, religiousness A, may come to be out of reach. What can Kierkegaard tell us, Christians and non-Christians, other than that we have gone too far . . . back?

It is a harsh judgment—we hope not too harsh. There are still individuals whom the clamor of the world, the powerful forces of the temporal, the external, and the immediate have not swayed completely, people who are still capable of that inwardness in which the religious and the true meaning of existence can be found. To these individuals, each being "that single individual," Kierkegaard is accessible. To that individual Kierkegaard speaks. And he speaks nowhere more beautifully, more eloquently, and more persuasively than in his "upbuilding discourses."

KIERKEGAARD had written and published eighteen of these discourses, in sets of two, three, and four (republished in one volume in 1844) before he wrote *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* and *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*. These two later collections (of three discourses) each "accompanied" Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works. *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* was meant to be a companion volume to *Stages on Life's Way*. *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* shortly followed the publication of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

Kierkegaard's purpose in these discourses was to make it clear that for him as a writer the religious did not follow the "esthetic" but was present from the very beginning, that he was a writer for whom in the very midst of his "esthetic productivity," the religious was the telos of his work. All this was not meant, however, merely to clarify his development as a writer. As he tells us in his prefaces, the discourses were to serve as a medium by which the reader is to come to an understanding of his own life, to an understanding of whether or not he lives authentically.

To live authentically is to become a single individual. This category, for Kierkegaard, has little to do with the individualism of liberalism. His "single individual" is a religious category. It denotes the individual's relating himself to himself—before God. It means taking responsibility for one's self—before God. Through the upbuilding discourses, the individual is to test himself by thinking along with the author. The author of upbuilding discourses does not exhort, does not pass judgment. God alone can judge. What the author can do is prod the reader to address to himself the questions the discourses raise. In quiet meditation along with the author, the reader is to search his self; in stillness he is to offer himself for judgment to God.

Since the discourses have a special purpose, Kierkegaard asks the reader to disregard their external merits. As a needlewoman who has woven a beautiful cloth for sacred use, but who would be distressed if someone were to see her artistry instead of the meaning of the cloth, so the author of the upbuilding discourses would be offended if someone were to praise his eloquence or find fault with it. What matters is the will to listen and appropriate the meaning—which is in the beholder, in the reader's understanding. To drive home this point—to make it clear that as an author he is just a "vanishing occasion"—Kierkegaard likens himself to a prompter in a theater. The prompter is the "insignificant one," the one "who sits and whispers." What he whispers is declaimed by the actor. On the actor everybody's eyes are fixed; in his portraying a specific person the words whispered by the prompter acquire truth.

IN THE theater of life, the author of religious discourses is still a prompter, but the stage, the actors, and the audience change. The stage is eternity. The actors are the listeners, the audience of the secular arts. Each member of the audience is called upon to become an actor, an actor however who speaks not loudly, but "in silence speaks in himself, with himself, to himself." Where everyone is an actor, there is no audience in the ordinary sense of the word. In the medium of a religious discourse, however, there is an audience—God. As S.K. puts it, "In the theater the performance is played before persons who are called spectators, but at the religious address God himself is present; in the most earnest sense he is checking on how it is being spoken."

But if the author wishes to be a "vanishing occasion" and offers his discourses as an intermediary through which the reader comes to an understanding of himself before God, what role remains for the reviewer, an outsider par excellence? The reviewer who wants to remain faithful to Kierkegaard can do only this: humble himself and be satisfied with being an announcer. He can

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tell the future reader what to expect to find in the discourses, but the "finding" must be done by the reader.

The reviewer can tell the reader that in *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* he is to think along with the author about what it means to seek God, how the "resolution of duty" that ought to be present in marriage transforms romantic love into love that conquers everything, and how the awareness of one's mortality, of the certainty of death, of "death's decision" enhances earnestness in life. In *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, the reader is to reflect along with the author on what purity of heart is, how to acquire absolute confidence in Divine providence, and what it means to follow Christ. The reader must read slowly and must do a great deal of work himself. The reader who follows this advice, Kierkegaard says, will find and appropriate the meaning of the discourses "as if it had arisen in his own heart."

We Are Many

A PEOPLE DIVIDED: JUDAISM IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA. By JACK WERTHEIMER. *Basic Books. 267 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Edward S. Shapiro**

THE SLOGAN of the United Jewish Appeal, the most successful of all of America's philanthropies in terms of fund-raising, is "We Are One." The UJA's success is due to the deep emotional ties of American Jewry with Israel, combined with the fact that the major part of the funds raised in the annual UJA campaign goes to support various social welfare agencies in the Jewish state. An annual contribution to the UJA has become arguably the lowest common denominator of American Jewish identity. This unity, however, does not extend to the realm of American Judaism.

As Jack Wertheimer's cogent, eloquent, and well-researched survey of contemporary American Judaism makes clear, belligerence and intolerance have become the hallmarks of American Judaism. Typical is the 1984 comment of Rabbi Nisson Wolpin in the *Jewish Observer*, an Orthodox publication, regarding cooperation with the non-Orthodox. "While compromise for the sake of unity can often make good sense," Wolpin noted, "when dealing with basic principles of faith, 'compromise' is actually a sell-out. . . . It is time that all Orthodox rabbis recognize that *Reform and Conservative Judaism are far, far removed from Torah*, and that *Klal Yisroel* [the community of Israel] is betrayed—not served—when Orthodoxy enters in religious association with them." He warned those within the Orthodox ranks contemplating interdenominational cooperation "to take note of the awesome pitfalls involved and step back from the abyss."

This intolerance is also prevalent in Israel, which is periodically convulsed by struggles involving Jewish identity and Judaism. The most recent clash occurred a half-decade ago over the issue of "Who is a Jew." This stemmed from the insistence of Israel's Orthodox rabbinate on defining a Jew as someone either born to a Jewish mother or converted according to traditional Jewish law by an Orthodox rabbi. Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jews in America strongly protested this definition, since it denied automatic Israeli citizenship and other benefits accruing to Jews in Israel to those who had been converted by non-Orthodox rabbis. The non-Orthodox threatened to withhold funds from the UJA and to take other actions if Israeli authorities caved in to Orthodox pressure.

This intense reaction in America to the "Who is a Jew" question seemed at first glance to be incongruous in view of the sparse number of non-Orthodox converts who had settled, or were planning to settle, in Israel and who demanded the right of citizenship under Israel's "law of return." But the issue was never "Who is a Jew," but rather "Who is a Rabbi." The Orthodox position denied religious legitimacy to the non-Orthodox rabbinate, and this was a challenge that Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist rabbis, their seminaries, and their laity could not ignore.

THE "Who is a Jew" issue was simply the latest in a long line of controversies that had divided American Jews along denominational lines. It had been preceded during the 1970s and 1980s by disputes over the Reform movement's broadening of Jewish identity to encompass patrilineal descent, the Conservative movement's decision to ordain women, and the increasing willingness of Reform rabbis to officiate at intermarriages. Indeed, so divisive has American Judaism seemingly become that Irving Greenberg, the head of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership (CLAL) and a spokesman for left-wing Orthodoxy, invited representatives of the four Jewish denominations to a 1986 conference titled, "Will There Be One Jewish People by the Year 2000?" Greenberg himself was quite somber about the future of American Judaism, predicting that the Orthodox would refuse marriage with the non-Orthodox because of doubts about their Jewish bona fides.

Wertheimer shares Greenberg's

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EDWARD S. SHAPIRO *is Professor of History at Seton Hall University and the author of* A Time For Healing: American Jewry After World War II *(Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).*

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anxieties. The title of chapter nine of *A People Divided,* the most important in the book, asks the question, "Religious Movements in Collision: A Jewish Culture War?" and he answers in the affirmative. Wertheimer concludes his volume with the bleak warning that "It is no longer possible or wise to dismiss religious polarization as peripheral to Jewish life. The divided world of Judaism imperils the unity of the Jewish people in America." "Name-calling and invective," he laments, "are now routinely injected into Jewish public discourse." According to Wertheimer, we are now witnessing a Jewish Kulturkampf in which Orthodox (and Conservative) spokesmen portray the Reform movement as assimilationist and deviant, while Reform leaders such as Rabbi Alexander Schindler argue in turn that Orthodoxy fosters "stale repression, fossilized tradition, and ethical corruption."

Judging from the pronouncements of the representatives of the four Jewish denominations and by surveys of the sentiments of rabbinical students in the various American Jewish seminaries, Wertheimer's fears are warranted. But, one can ask, are these necessarily the most accurate and relevant barometers to evaluate the future of American Jewry and of American Judaism? Is factionalism the major problem facing American Jewry? Factionalism is, after all, a sign of health. Factions exist when issues are worth fighting over. For many observers of American Jewry, the major problem facing American Judaism is not divisiveness but indifference. The soaring rate of Jewish intermarriage is important not because the diverse responses of Reform and Orthodoxy to exogamy threaten Jewish unity, but because intermarriage manifests a widespread apathy toward Jewish identity and continuity.

WERTHEIMER is a professor of history at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, the major bastion of Conservative Judaism, and it is not surprising that he takes seriously the rhetoric emanating from the rabbis and from the offices of the four American Jewish denominations. Nor is it surprising that, as a faculty member of the JTS, he should be dismayed by American Jewry's divisiveness. Ever since Solomon Schechter, the first chancellor of the JTS, proclaimed early in this century that "Catholic Israel" should be the goal of the Seminary, the Judaism of the JTS has striven to be both traditional and innovative. From the Seminary's perspective, Orthodoxy was a European fossil that could never flourish in America, while Reform was too willing to sacrifice Jewish tradition in behalf of acculturation and Americanization. Only the Judaism of the Seminary was true to both tradition and

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modernity. Thus, for example, in the early 1950s the Seminary sanctioned riding in a car on the Sabbath, but only if it was necessary to take part in religious services.

The Seminary's gurus hoped that this combination of tradition and innovation would be attractive to the great majority of American Jews who remembered the world of their fathers and yet wished to adapt to American conditions. During the immediate post-World War II decades these expectations seemed to be confirmed by the rapid growth in Conservative congregations and in the number of families affiliating with the Conservative movement. Indeed, most observers believed Conservative Judaism to be the religious wave of the future.

It was not to be, however. By the 1970s, the centrist Judaism of the JTS was under attack from a resurgent Orthodoxy on the right and from an increasingly attractive Reform on the left. Any hope that Conservative Judaism had a religious formula that would be attractive to the majority of American Jews disappeared. In fact, as Marshall Sklare, the movement's foremost sociological authority, wrote, the movement had serious morale problems of its own, and many of its leading lights were now skeptical that the movement's message had any appeal to American Jews. If *A People Divided* is any indication, however, the vision of "Catholic Israel" continues to resonate at the Seminary.

THE OVERWHELMING majority of American Jews are less troubled than representatives of the various Jewish denominations by what they perceive to be a tempest in a clerical teacup. In contrast to the "elite" religion of the rabbis and the professors at the seminaries, the "folk" religion of those in the pews is not unduly concerned with matters of theology and Jewish law. This Jewish folk religion emphasizes Zionism, political and social liberalism, the struggle against anti-Semitism, and Jewish survival. Even the Orthodox laity are far more tolerant of the failings of their coreligionists than one would assume from the anathemas their leaders are hurling at the non-Orthodox.

American Jews are both Jews and Americans. As Americans they share in that most important characteristic of American religion—freedom of choice. If in Europe Jewish identity was a matter of birth, in America it has been a matter of choice. The nostalgia for a unified Jewish community cannot overcome the centrifugal force of American history and sociology. For better or worse, denominational pluralism and all that this portends for Jewish continuity is here to stay. "A People Divided" is less a problem than a condition that American Jews will have to live with.

BRIEFLY NOTED

PUBLIC EDUCATION: AN AUTOPSY. By MYRON LIEBERMAN. *Harvard University Press. 379 pp. $27.95.*

THE SCHOOL-CHOICE CONTROVERSY: WHAT IS CONSTITUTIONAL? Edited by JAMES W. SKILLEN. *Baker Book House/Center for Public Justice. 128 pp., $6.99 paper.*

Two new entries in the never-ending stream of books advocating parental choice of schools take diametrically opposed routes to a similar conclusion. Myron Lieberman argues that public education is beyond redemption because it is inherently unable to perform effectively and is overly sensitive to the interests of teachers while ignoring those of children and their parents. He calls for a consumer-driven market in educational services, with for-profit schools encouraged to serve those parents willing and able to pay extra to give their children advantages. He dismisses with scorn attempts to impose policy constraints on such a market, such as FIRST THINGS contributor John Coons' proposal that schools receiving public funds be required to admit a proportion of children from poor families. Lieberman has delivered the most relentless attack yet on the American system of government monopoly of free schooling. The authors represented in the Center for Public Justice collection, by contrast, argue that a respect for liberty requires that parents be enabled to choose schools that satisfy their own religious or other deeply held convictions, without financial penalty, through a system of public funding that does not discriminate against choices made on a religious basis. Contending that there is no such thing as "neutral" education, the authors accuse the present system of representing an establishment of secularism and a denial of free exercise of religion, thus doubly violating the religion clause of the First Amendment. These brief essays—by ethicist Richard Baer, legal scholars Edward Larson and Phillip Johnson, and political scientist (and editor) James Skillen—provide a brief but clear exposition of the principled case for parental choice, an exposition sympathetic to religion but not premised upon theological considerations.

— *Charles L. Glenn*

THE APOSTOLIC FAITH: PROTESTANTS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS. By FREDERICK W. NORRIS. *Liturgical Press. 206 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Emmanuel School of Religion is a small independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ seminary set among the mountains in northeastern Tennessee. As with other schools in this tradition, students there have to read the writings of Alexander Campbell. But at Emmanuel they also read the church fathers. This is because Fred Norris, the author of this delightful little book, teaches there. *The Apostolic Faith* is a warm and engaging memoir of Norris' father and grandfather, both preachers, who were wary of Catholics, and Norris' discovery that Evangelicals and Catholics have more in common than they realize. It is also a lively introduction to the Nicene Creed, the faith they share. Norris is an accomplished

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historian of Christian thought, but his treatment of the Creed focuses on its significance for the faith and life of the churches (Evangelical and Roman Catholic) today. One story stands out. When Norris' father was serving a congregation in West Virginia in the 1960s a delegation from the local Roman Catholic Church asked him to consider becoming their priest. He was honored but declined. Norris takes this as a metaphor to urge that it is time Roman Catholics and Evangelicals take each other more seriously and seek to discover the unity they share. This is a wise and hopeful book, written out of love, and filled with yearning for the unity of the Church.

— *Robert L. Wilken*

THE DEBATE ON THE CONSTITUTION. Edited by BERNARD BAILYN. *Library of America. 2,389 pp. in two volumes. $35 each, $70 boxed set.*

For the last few years the Library of America has been producing splendid, and moderately priced, editions of American classics: Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Henry James, Twain, Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, and, well, you name it. Not limiting itself to novels, short stories, and poems, Library of America has also come out with historical and political documents of special literary merit—for instance, a two-volume collection of Abraham Lincoln's speeches, letters, and miscellaneous scribblings, plus a new edition of Ulysses S. Grant's famous memoirs. *The Debate on the Constitution* is the latest addition to this historical/political line; it is, as its subtitle indicates, a compendium of "Federalist and Antifederalist Speeches, Articles, and Letters During the Struggle Over Ratification," which took place from 1787 to 1789. The ratification debate was principally an argument as to how the country should be governed; on the one hand were the federalists (including Madison, Hamilton, Franklin, John Jay, Washington, and John Adams, among others) pushing for a strong, centralized, national government, and on the other hand the antifederalists (such as Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, George Clinton, and Elbridge Gerry) favoring a looser structure that vested more authority in state and local governments. More than two centuries after ratification, the issues discussed in these pages are still very much with us, and in many respects very much unresolved. But they are argued here with far greater eloquence and erudition, on both sides, than in any modern forum. Definitely worth owning.

BUILDING THE FREE SOCIETY: DEMOCRACY, CAPITALISM, AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING. Edited by GEORGE WEIGEL and ROBERT ROYAL. *Eerdmans/Ethics and Public Policy Center. 246 pp. $16.99 paper.*

Substantially revised and updated from an earlier edition, this book is a must for people who want to think through the connections between Christian faith and public life. The informative essays take in the full sweep of modern Catholic social thought, from *Rerum Novarum* through *Centesimus Annus*, and essayists include, in addition to the editors, such authorities as William Murphy, Thomas Kohler, Robert Sirico, and James Finn. This volume belongs in any basic library dealing with questions of religion and society.

AN APOLOGY FOR APOLOGETICS: A STUDY IN THE LOGIC OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE. By PAUL J. GRIFFITHS. *Orbis. 150 pp. $39.95 cloth, $18.95 paper.*

Engaging in interreligious dialogue—whether one be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or Whatever—is generally thought to require a studied measure of wimpishness. In order to be polite and in order to keep the conversation going, one must pretend that he does not think his own religion to be true. Not so, says Paul Griffiths of the University of Chicago Divinity School in this bracing and well-argued little book. He offers a convincing apologetic for NOIA—the necessity of interreligious apologetics. All religions are chock full of "doctrine-expressing statements" that purport to be true, and an authentic interreligious encounter will recognize that statements are sometimes incompatible. Members of religious communities engaged in dialogue "enter the lists" to champion the doctrine-expressing statements of their own communities. They do so in order to learn but also, and inescapably, in order to vindicate their understanding of the truth. Without "positive apologetics," Griffiths contends, interreligious dialogue degenerates into fideism and subjectivism. In addition to corrupting the dialogue process, the result is to discredit the notion that religion itself is capable of addressing questions of truth in any publicly important sense. And that, the author observes, is pretty much the way religion is viewed, with considerable justice, in the contemporary world. This is an important book deserving of careful attention.

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES. By KENNETH D. WALD. *Congressional Quarterly Press. 380 pp. $20.95 paper.*

The second and much-updated edition of a much-respected study of the ambiguous relationship between religion and the political culture. Ambiguity and balance mark the author's approach to the hotly controverted questions engaged, and some readers may wish for a more sustained argument on one side or the other. But Wald's determination to be fair to alternative views is also a strength of this reliable survey of issues too often taken captive to partisanship.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Bloody-Minded Compassion

Bizarre. Beyond the pale. Outrageous. Mad. Those are some of the terms applied to the suggestion that killing abortionists in order to defend unborn children may be morally justified. Planned Parenthood and other pro-abortionists have capitalized with great success on the killing of abortionist David Gunn in Pensacola, Florida. Last August in Wichita, Kansas, Shelley Shannon shot and wounded George Tiller, an abortionist who specializes in third trimester, post-viability, terminations. Also receiving considerable publicity was Father David Trosch of Alabama, who tried to place an ad in a Mobile newspaper. The ad pictures a gun pointed at an abortionist who is about to kill a baby, and the text reads, "Justified Homicide?" Fr. Trosch was promptly silenced by his bishop. All the major pro-life organizations have strongly condemned the use or advocacy of violence in opposing abortion. Contra Planned Parenthood et al., two decades of pro-life activity have been remarkably free of violence. Except for police violence against protestors, as civil libertarian Nat Hentoff has been writing about for years in *The Village Voice* and elsewhere.

Nevertheless, there are a few voices at the edge of the pro-life movement that are now urging a reconsideration of the use of lethal force. The arguments, pro and con, are aired in *Life Advocate*, a national magazine published in Portland, Oregon. Publisher Andrew Burnett invokes authorities from the Bible to Blackstone in contending that the killing of abortionists is justified homicide. He relates a discussion with a pro-life activist who opposes the use of force. Burnett questions how much this fellow really cares about the thirty million children who have been killed since the *Roe* decision of 1973. Burnett writes: "At that point in the conversation I had to stop and ask him, 'Do you really believe that abortion is murder?' 'Of course I do,' he said. Then I probed a little deeper. I asked him if he viewed abortion the same way that he would view the murder of one of his own children or for that matter the shooting of an abortionist. He paused for a moment before he acknowledged that he didn't feel the same way about the death of children in abortion and the possible murder of his own child. I responded that I felt the same way. There is a special bond that we have with our kids. But our lack of 'feeling' towards the unborn should not get in the way of acknowledging that they do deserve the same protection that we would give the born."

In the same issue, associate editor Cathy Ramey asks the question, "So where do we go from here?" She answers: "I can't tell anyone what they ought to do, that they are obligated to the kind of action taken against Gunn and Tiller. For me, the issue is that we need to be articulating truth. Even though I may be unable to defend babies in the way that Shannon and Griffin (as accused) did, the truth is that Scripture supports defending your neighbor's life, even with lethal force. To accord these children less protection and to condemn their protectors is to agree with the abortion industry that they aren't *really* human. Their lives are not even as valuable as the life of a serial killer and, as someone who wrote a letter stated, we *'prefer live abortionists over live babies.'*

"Unfortunately, many in the pro-life movement have paid the pinch of incense that the world demanded in order to justify the continual killing of children. You see, if pro-life leaders are saying that these children aren't legitimately entitled to the same level of care and protection as a born person (even a born killer) then it only stands to reason that perhaps pre-natal killings *are* just a matter of choice and not a grave moral evil."

Caricature and Credibility

It is hard to say how many people are thinking along the lines espoused by Burnett and Ramey. One suspects that the number is very small, but it could grow to the point where the caricature of the pro-life

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movement peddled by Planned Parenthood begins to achieve a measure of credibility. No doubt a larger number of people are confused, feeling that they are not able to articulate precisely why the use of lethal force is strategically disastrous and morally prohibited. Some of the answers are offered in another statement published in *Life Advocate*. Written by Brian Clowes, author of the *Pro-Life Activists' Encyclopedia*, and signed by nationally prominent pro-life leaders, the statement says of those who entertain the use of lethal force, "They are showing others that they have lost sight of God's eternal plan. They are telling the world that they are frustrated and that they are going to capitulate [sic] and take things into their own hands. In other words, they are implying by their words and actions that God has somehow lost control of the situation."

The statement argues that "anyone who tries to justify the murder of abortionists who are about to kill preborn babies will not be able to stop at that point. . . . More steps will inevitably follow until some activists begin urging the execution of feminists who push for abortion and the politicians who vote for it. . . . Even if only a few misguided individuals stoop to murder, the public will turn against us. Recruiting will become almost impossible. Finally, the pro-abortion movement will gain the martyrs it has always needed for its own validation. The attention of the country will be forever diverted from graphic pictures of aborted preborn babies to even more explicit photographs of abortionists lying in pools of their own blood."

The statement does not deny the right, maybe the duty, to defend the innocent. "Yes, we may very well kill an intruder who threatens our children, but if we knew that such a killing would touch off a chain of events that could very well lead to the deaths of many *more* children, we would choose instead to restrain or disable the trespasser instead of taking his life." Not only would more children be killed, but there is a deep principle involved. "Nonviolence is a foundation stone of Christian activism. It cannot be removed without damaging everything that rests upon it. If we repudiate nonviolence, we will also betray the thousands of pro-lifers who have laid their very lives and all of their possessions on the line for the babies."

Clowes and the other signers go on to say, "We cannot always understand God's plan. What would have happened if someone had taken the life of the world's biggest abortionist in 1975? Bernard Nathanson would not be fighting for life today. What if someone had killed Carol Everett? Or George Bush? Or Ronald Reagan? They were all pro-abortion at one time. What if Christians had risen up at the beginning of Church history and had killed Saul as he presided over the stoning of Stephen? He was, after all, persecuting Christians. If they had killed their tormentor, Paul would not have proclaimed the Gospel in many nations, and thousands would not have been saved." The conclusion of the statement is emphatic: "God has not abandoned us. We must trust Him instead of relying on our own strength. The killing of human beings, either born or preborn, has absolutely no place in this movement."

Despite the efforts of *Life Advocate* and a few others, the question of the use of lethal force by the pro-life movement is, we believe, securely closed. Of course it is possible that it will happen again that someone who is mentally deranged or blinded by anguish for the unborn will kill an abortionist. In view of the many thousands of activists on all sides of the abortion dispute, there is no way of assuring that that will not happen again. If it does, we can be sure that it will be fully exploited by pro-choice forces. But the pro-life movement, we are confident, will remain determinedly nonviolent. That is because many, if not most, are committed to nonviolence as a pacifist principle. There is also the prudential judgment, expressed in the Clowes statement, that the use of violence would destroy the movement and result in the death of many more children.

Revolutionary Violence

There is the further consideration that such use of lethal force is an act of revolutionary violence against this constitutional order. The law, for the time being, allows abortionists to do what they do. *Life Advocate* cites venerable Catholic and Protestant authorities to the effect that, when the law of the state and the law of God are in conflict, Christians must obey the law of God. If the law demanded that people have abortions or participate in the committing of abortion, we would have no choice but to be in resistance, perhaps violent resistance. The law as it presently stands, however, allows abortions. It is a great injustice that there is not a just law that would protect the life of the innocent. It is among the chief purposes of the pro-life movement to obtain such just law. It is by no means evident that the present lack of such law means that this constitutional order is a morally illegitimate regime. The legitimacy of revolutionary violence is contingent upon, among other things, the determination that this is an illegitimate regime.

Strange how things come around again. A long time ago your editor wrote with Peter Berger *Movement and Revolution* (Doubleday, 1970). Then the loose talk about revolutionary violence was coming from the left, and your editor's purpose was to write a cautionary essay, noting the ways in which "justified war doctrine" places severe moral strictures on the use of violence. Arguments now advanced by *Life Advocate* were then advanced by the proponents of radical change, including the change that was called "liberalized abortion." Cathy Ramey appeals to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran

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pastor killed by the Nazis in 1945 for his part in the plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. It is a suggestive comparison. Bonhoeffer had come to the firm conclusion that the Nazi regime was morally illegitimate and corrupt in all its parts, in theory and practice. He decided, in fear and trembling, that tyrannicide was the only available remedy. Do people like Cathy Ramey mean to say that that is our situation? Moreover, in view of alternative political orders and knowing the depravities of sinful humanity, how would one determine that the American regime is illegitimate?

Those are among the questions that need to be put to people who advocate the use of lethal force. In our judgment, to raise such questions is to answer them. This journal is not reluctant to pursue deeply disturbing questions, as is evident, for but one related example, in Russell Hittinger's sobering article, "When the Court Should Not Be Obeyed" (FT, October 1993). Conceivably the day may come when thoughtful citizens will be forced to conclude that this is not a legitimate regime, and to ponder the moral responsibilities that attend that conclusion. We all have a strong interest in hoping that we will never see that day, and an even stronger duty to do what we can to prevent it.

There is impressive moral and legal precedent affirming the duty to defend and the duty to rescue. In our historical circumstance, the same tradition forbids the use of violence in a misguided effort to exercise such duty. Talk about the use of lethal force is, in fact, talk about revolution and civil war. It could conceivably, if the talk were turned into action, lead to a great bloodletting and destruction for both the born and unborn. Much more likely, it would lead to the demise of a pro-life movement that bears the most luminous hope for the righting of a great wrong in this constitutional order that is still, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, the last, best hope of earth. We sincerely hope that *Life Advocate* and others who are tempted will abandon their flirtation with the culture of death.

FT

UNFAIR FAIRNESS

The Fairness Doctrine. That sounds eminently fair. But the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) is deeply concerned about an effort in Congress to restore it. The Fairness Doctrine was abandoned by the Federal Communications Commission in 1987. The doctrine required radio and television stations to give time for opposing points of view on controversial issues. But now, says the newsletter of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), restoring the doctrine would have a chilling effect. "In a nation so secular in its outlook, many formerly orthodox religious principles have become increasingly 'controversial.' These include conventional Judeo-Christian teachings such as sexual morality, marriage, parental responsibility, and the sanctity of human life. Does a religious broadcaster condemning abortion on a biblical basis have to give free airtime to allow, say, a spokesperson from the National Abortion Rights Action League to speak in favor of abortion?" In addition, say NRB and NAE, restoring the doctrine would require another layer of federal bureaucracy to monitor all the religious broadcasting in the country.

Their concern is entirely warranted, but it also reflects an interesting twist. Many years ago, mainline Protestants strongly favored the Fairness Doctrine. It gave them a crack at radio and television time, although usually in what came to be called "the Sunday morning ghetto." Fundamentalists (as Evangelicals were then called) remained aloof from such "worldly" communications, except for a few paid programs. In the last twenty years, however, Evangelical Protestants have built a veritable empire of hundreds of radio stations and cable television programs. Apart from Mother Angelica and the VISN cable program, Catholics and oldline Protestants have not been very adept in this field. Originally, the Fairness Doctrine gave Catholics and oldliners access to the "secular" media. Now Evangelicals oppose it for fear that it will give secularists access to their media.

So what's fair? According to the experts on fiber optics and the like, we're on the edge of a revolution in which the established networks will shrink in importance as average Americans will have access to hundreds of TV channels. As for radio, exaggerated reports of its demise forty years ago have long since given way to the recognition of its indispensability in maintaining free expression on public affairs. This is no time for expanding government control of communications. Let a thousand flowers bloom, and let the FCC keep its hands off them.

FT

THE TRIUMPH OF IDEOLOGY OVER THE OBVIOUS

PBS's Charlie Rose had the formidable John Leo of *U.S. News & World Report* on one night, together with, among others, Katha Pollitt, an editor at the *Nation*. It got David R. Carlin, Jr. of *Commonweal*

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to thinking. The subject was the pros and cons of single-parenthood in America. Like Leo, and unlike Pollitt, Carlin thinks it is beyond dispute that the fatherless-child epidemic has been "a gigantic social disaster." What will they be discussing next week on Charlie Rose, he asks—whether the earth is flat? He expects some flat-earther (preferably from the *Nation*) will make the case that the evidence is not conclusive. Carlin understands why some men don't want to hear about the calamity of single parenthood. They have a vested interest in protecting the pattern of male flight from the family, which is to say male flight from responsibility. And some single mothers don't want to hear about it because, no matter how much you say you're not blaming them, they can't help but feel guilty.

But why are people such as Ms. Pollitt and other "Apologists for Murphy Brown" so determined to deny the obvious? Because, says Carlin, they subscribe to an ideology of which the pivotal ethical doctrine is that the *summum bonum* of human life is virtually unlimited personal freedom. Carlin explains: "From this single axiom are deduced a number of doctrines. Heading the list is this: (1) the good society is the society whose only common good is the agreement not to agree on any common good. But this is followed by others: (2) cultural diversity is to be prized regardless of the content of the culture; (3) the sexual liberation movement is a great step forward in the advance of civilization; (4) the right to abortion is a fundamental human right; (5) the right to suicide is another fundamental human right; and of course (6) regardless of whether or not there are children involved, society has no business pressuring people to get married or remain married.

"These doctrines and others are part of an ideological package. Attack any one of them, and you have attacked the supreme axiom upon which they are all based; but attack the central axiom, and you have attacked all the other doctrines that are derived from it. An attack on any doctrine, then, is an attack on the whole system. It's like the three musketeers: one for all and all for one. Or it's like the traditional notion of the unity of Catholic doctrine: attack one doctrine, and you have attacked the church's teaching authority; hence you have indirectly attacked all church doctrine.

"At all events, subscribers to this ideology cannot afford to yield on a single point of doctrine, no matter how illogical or contrary to fact. This is why John Leo is as likely to persuade Katha Pollitt to change her mind as is the A.S.P.C.A. to persuade adherents of the Santaria faith to renounce the sacrifice of chickens.

"Mention of the Santaria reminds us that religion always involves sacrifice. Some religions sacrifice chickens. Others sacrifice contrite hearts. The secular religion of the cultural Left sacrifices the prosperity and happiness of millions of children."

FT

Blaming the Victims' Defenders

Watching television one night, Paul Greenberg of the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* saw Bill Clinton being asked whether the new health plan would fund abortion. Clinton leaned over and said he wanted to issue a challenge to those who oppose abortion. There wouldn't be a problem, he said, if those opposed to it would each volunteer to adopt one unwanted, unintended infant. Of course hundreds of thousands of people do want to adopt babies, but they can't very well be adopted if they're killed before they're born. Greenberg has some other thoughts on the President's odd response. "The President was suggesting that responsibility for the 1.6 million abortions performed every year in this country . . . should properly belong to those who are trying to stop this prenatal carnage.

"Note that the President challenged only those who have problems with abortion—not those who find having a child inconvenient just now, and use abortion as a method of birth control. Nor those who don't want to be tied down just yet, or who would really rather not interrupt their school year. Nor those who think a baby would get in the way of a career. Nor those who have repeated abortions because they're trying for a boy. Nor those who . . . well, you name your favorite morally dubious reason for having an abortion.

"Oppose abortion do you? The President's not very well disguised riposte: Then raise somebody else's child.

"The possibilities of this piece of clintonspeak are nigh endless: Oppose bank robberies do you? Then find some other way for the robber to get the money he's after. Oppose envy? Then manage to find some other way for the envious to get their heart's desire. Think drunk drivers should stay off the road? Then spend your nights driving drunks home. And so strangely on."

FT

Discriminating Violence

Nobody drinks "alcohol," G. K. Chesterton pointed out against the prohibitionists. People drink beer and wine and whisky and brandy and frozen daquiris. Only chemists force this behavior into the common category called "alcohol." Similarly, James Bowman argues in *The New Criterion,* we should be skeptical about Senator Paul Simon and others who would lead a crusade against "violence" on television. When we try to think about violence in the abstract, "the result is guaranteed muddy

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thinking—on the order of the self-evidently false New Age platitude that 'violence never solves anything.' It solves lots of things, as anyone who descends from Olympus and gets close enough to it to see what it is for will tell you. What's your problem? Not enough money to buy drugs tonight? Mugging somebody will solve it. Or maybe you're the muggee rather than the mugger. Then your problem is to avoid being mugged. Superior force, successfully threatened or applied, will solve your problem—and give the mugger back his. Violence is a wonderful problem solver, perhaps the most efficacious of them all, which is one reason why it is both forbidden and fascinating."

The problem with "violence" on television, says Bowman, is that violent acts are detached from any context which could give them moral meaning. "Maybe the image of the lone lawman standing up to the bad guys was factitious and hackneyed and artistically clumsy, but it provided such a context—one which has dissipated as much in reality as on TV since the glamour of Matt Dillon was superseded by that of Bob Dylan. We need the glamour of discriminating violence in order to offset the collective moral lassitude induced by too much of the undiscriminating kind. Playing Simon Says with the government is certainly not going to bring it back—even if Simon were less simple than he is. Maybe nothing else is either. But if we all work to get as much violence on television as possible, maybe the effort to make sense of it all will result eventually in something like a plausible moral context." Maybe.

FT

GETTING REALLY RICH

We have been severely taken to task in several quarters for suggesting in a recent book (*Doing Well and Doing Good: The Challenge to the Christian Capitalist,* Doubleday) that there is no clear moral principle by which one could say that Michael Milken made "too much" money. Milken, it may be recalled, was the infamous (or famous) dealer in junk bonds who was reported to have had an annual income in excess of $500 million. We note the appearance of a new book by a professor of business history, Robert Sobel (*Dangerous Dreamers,* Wiley). According to *The Economist,* Sobel argues that, had he remained free to operate, "Milken would have been drawn to financing new industries in Latin America and Eastern Europe. He might indeed have been judged the greatest banker of the age."

Like others before him, Milken's "real crime" was to be a corporate raider. He had learned "to identify, buy, and dismember badly-managed companies whose shares did not reflect the value of their underlying assets. Later he began using his acquisitions to assemble conglomerates." Actually, says *The Economist,* in the 1980s comparatively few junk bonds were used to finance hostile takeovers. But a couple of instances caught the public's imagination and did Milken in. *The Economist* concludes that Milken and others "were punished at least as much for the unpopularity of their ideas as for breaking the law."

We have enough controversies on our plate, so we're not going to claim that Michael Milken would have been the greatest banker of the age, or even that what he did was good for business. Frankly, we don't know enough to make a judgment one way or the other. But this we do know: There are very reputable and morally responsible authorities who make a strong case that Milken and his junk bonds (junk meaning high risk) were a great boon to the economy. (As it happens, junk bonds seem to be coming back in a big way.) And this we do know: There is no clear moral principle that indicates it is wrong to make $500 million a year. The moral questions are what one does with it, and whether one's soul is captive to it, and whether, as *Centesimus Annus* teaches, the activity involved in getting it draws others into the circle of freedom in productivity and exchange. Mind you, our sympathy for Mr. Milken is limited. He is still really rich.

FT

CBS LEADS THE WAY

When William Donohue, president of the Catholic League For Religious and Civil Rights, first brought the program to our attention, we were a mite skeptical. We had seen an earlier episode of the CBS sitcom "Picket Fences" that some had protested as anti-Christian, and it turned out to be the kind of broad, and rather clever, parody that we thought it unlikely anyone would take as seriously anti-Christian. Moreover, while the Catholic League has a legitimate concern about the defamation of Catholicism, it is important to avoid being too thin-skinned. Humorless anti-defamationists defending the "rights" of every group under the sun have imposed a terrible pall of political correctness over the sometimes irritating give and take of free expression. So, as aforesaid, we were a mite skeptical. Then Mr. Donohue sent us a video of the "Picket Fences" episode in question, and we watched it.

In this story, a genetic disorder prevents an

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attractive young couple from having healthy children. She is a devout Catholic and refuses to use artificial contraception. That is the story line that sets the stage for everybody in the sitcom to get in on the discussion of the ludicrousness of Catholic moral teaching. Her priest, a mousy fellow, hesitantly suggests they try "the rhythm method," to which the response is, "You must be joking." The priest mumbles that his hands are tied, since he would be "excommunicated" if he permitted contraception. A local Protestant minister (the collar suggests Lutheran or Episcopalian) gets in on the act, declaring that the Catholic position on contraception "is nuts." "This birth control thing goes to a larger conspiracy," he opines. "The Vatican wants the population explosion to help them achieve world domination." A judge, a sober and sympathetic member of the cast, warns, "If the Church doesn't take action, sooner or later the courts will." The day is coming, he warns, when the entire Catholic Church will be sued for its moral teaching. "And believe me," he says, "the last thing that anybody wants is for judges to start legislating religion. But if the Catholic Church stays rigid on some of these rules, that day is coming."

Let it be said that "Picket Fences" is a kooky program, sometimes amusingly so. In the same episode, a psychiatrist falls in love with his client, a lady cop who sets him up to be arrested for falling in love with her. Also, a stereotypically Jewish shyster lawyer gets an appellate court to agree that clients should not tell the truth to their counsel. The lawyer's client, who happens to be mayor of the town, dies by spontaneous combustion, leaving only a handful of ashes behind. In the context of such a crazy program, is the venom against the Catholic Church really to be taken seriously? The answer is definitely yes. In this episode, only the polemic against Catholicism is not held up to ridicule. The incident with the psychiatrist is not an indictment of psychiatry. It is one misguided man betrayed by an unstable woman. The ludicrous argument of the shyster lawyer is countered by a very sympathetic young black lawyer for the prosecution. And, of course, the death by spontaneous combustion is presented as bizarre and utterly implausible.

Only the attack on the Church is left standing on its own merits, so to speak. Indeed the most sympathetic characters in the program, including the judge, join in the attack. The priest who represents the Church's teaching is portrayed as a pitiable incompetent who obviously does not agree with the Church and is incapable of defending the teaching, which, viewers are left in no doubt, is in fact indefensible. There is a lot of intended monkey business in "Picket Fences." But that cannot disguise what is the serious business of this episode, which is anti-Catholicism on a vituperative scale. The Catholic League is right to protest, and it should not be left to protest alone. We hope the protest will do some good. Whether it does or not, let the record show that CBS is leading the way in the indulgence of religious bigotry in network television. The "creative" people at CBS—meaning writers and directors who confuse courage with obnoxiousness —will likely take that as a compliment.

FT

Verdict First

Sexual harassment (are we the last to insist that the accent falls on the first syllable?) is a real problem. As with all problems, alarmist reactions can create new problems equally as real. In the last several years this has been demonstrated with dreadful consequences in the reaction to charges of sexual abuse in child care centers. Entire communities have been thrown into hysteria and innocent people have had their lives and reputations ruined. After much suffering and injustice, there are welcome signs of a new sobriety in handling charges of child abuse. Not so with sexual harassment. Also in some of our churches, officials have adopted a policy of verdict first and trial later, as the Queen explained to an amazed Alice. The following from *Forum Letter* discusses the situation among Lutherans:

"We are probably stepping way, way beyond the bounds of sexual correctness, but let us point out that the sexual conduct code of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a policy in want of basic fairness. By that we mean the policy and the process both fail to adequately safeguard the rights of the accused. There is no statute of limitations, investigations can begin based on hearsay, confessional privacy is not inviolate (which means it does not even exist), the accused—choosing to follow the process to the end—must testify, and as has happened, a pastor can find his or her synod bishop suddenly on the doorstep demanding the pastor's resignation, quite without benefit of having faced his or her accusers. (That hearing comes later.) It is a policy lacking evidentiary rules. It presumes guilt, not innocence. It inflicts grievous punishment prior to a finding.

"Here is our considered opinion should it happen to you. Do not resign on demand of the bishop without first getting thee to an attorney. Refuse private conversations with anyone connected with the accusation, including the bishop. Share what you must with the church council with your attorney present. The attorney can explain the disciplinary procedure and note the protective shortcomings of it. Refer further inquires to your attorney. If you think

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our advice drastic, consider the drastic consequences of trusting those charged with enforcing a policy so evidently open to abuse."

Extreme policies on sexual misconduct are largely driven by the demands of radical feminists who make no secret of their belief that all men are rapists or potential rapists. Such policies are generally implemented by timorous men who are terrified of getting on the wrong side of a woman's fury. The hard question for the churches is how much of the necessary trust between bishops, pastors, and parishioners—and how much elementary fairness and decency—they are prepared to sacrifice in order to prevent real, and relatively rare, instances of sexual misconduct.

FT

A WELL-FUNDED PHANTASM

A Protestant friend wonders why the bishops allow an organization such as Catholics for a Free Choice (CFC). The simple and accurate answer is that the bishops don't allow it. The bishops are in no position to either allow or disallow it. CFC has no connection with the Catholic Church. Since it was started in 1970, CFC has been a totally owned and controlled subsidiary of the abortion industry. Although at times CFC has claimed to have as many as five thousand members, it now acknowledges that it is "not a membership organization." CFC is, in the words of one critic, "a well-funded letterhead."

That does not stop CFC and its director, Frances Kissling, from taking full-page newspaper ads to present "an alternative Catholic view on abortion." Nor does it stop reporters in the prestige media from interviewing Ms. Kissling to get "the other side" on the Church and abortion. Kissling is not simply pro-choice, she is pro-abortion in the fullest sense of being part of the industry. Before directing CFC, she was cofounder of the National Abortion Federation, a trade association of abortion clinic managers. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are poured into CFC from sources such as the Sunnen Foundation, the Brush Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Unitarian Universalist Church—all major backers of pro-abortion and population control programs. CFC's first headquarters were located in the Planned Parenthood building in New York, and the two organizations collaborate in placing ads and other CFC efforts. And, of course, CFC is an affiliate of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights.

In sum, CFC is in no way a voice of dissent from within American Catholicism. It is a deliberately deceptive instrument of anti-Catholic propaganda that is bankrolled and controlled by institutions that make no secret of their belief that the Catholic Church is the single greatest threat to abortion, eugenics, euthanasia, population control, and other policies on the agenda of putative progress. Of course, they are probably right about that. Now that CFC and Ms. Kissling have been so thoroughly discredited, one waits to see what new ploy will be devised to promote the phantasm of "an alternative Catholic view."

FT

TO BE SURPRISED BY JOY

George Santayana on living with the knowledge of death: "That the end of life should be death may be sad: yet what other end can anything have? The end of an evening party is to go to bed; but its use is to gather congenial people together, that they may pass the time pleasantly. An invitation to the dance is not rendered ironical because the dance cannot last forever. . . . The transitoriness of things is essential to their physical being, and not at all sad in itself. . . . Folly on the contrary imagines that any scent is worth following, that we have an infinite nature, or no nature in particular, that life begins without obligations and can do business without capital, and that the will is vacuously free, instead of being a specific burden and a tight hereditary knot to be unravelled."

The passage is quoted in Daniel Callahan's marvelously thoughtful new book, *The Troubled Dream of Life: Living With Mortality* (Simon & Schuster), to which we will be returning in these pages. Callahan discusses the claim of the late theologian Paul Ramsey that "death with dignity" is a cruel delusion, that death is the final insult, the final indignity. With Santayana and others, Callahan wants to make the case that we can make sense of death as part of life. One opposing position, he notes, is the conceit that death can be conquered by medical science. Another, as in the case of Ramsey, is the hope of life beyond death that is offered by religion. But Callahan does not have it quite right. Paul Ramsey recognized as fully as Callahan all that is involved in "living with mortality." He did not need religion in order to cope with mortality. The Christian truth of the resurrection is utterly gratuitous. It is entirely a gift, both to those who can and those who cannot cope with mortality. It is not a coping mechanism. In response to Santayana's question, "What other end can anything have?" comes the answer: the fulness of life, namely, God.

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Callahan says that he no longer considers himself a Christian. But he ends the book on this note. "Can death, and the life in which it is embedded, be transcended? I do not see this for myself, but I hope to live the remainder of my days in a way that at least puts me in a position to be (as Wordsworth put it) 'surprised by joy.' It is unlikely but perhaps not impossible. I wait and watch." As do we all. Although some of us have been persuaded that we know the One for whom we wait and watch.

FT

But What About the Other Side?

This subscriber is undoubtedly right. She complains that all the commentators in the last issue's symposium on the new encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor,* were very positive about it. What about the other side? she asks. What about it indeed. There are a couple of dozen Catholic moral theologians we could have asked to participate. They undoubtedly would have asserted, as in fact they have been asserting in other publications, that "there is nobody here but us chickens." The Pope has caricatured their positions, nobody teaches what the Pope criticizes them for teaching, and so forth.

Or we could have asked the editors of, say, the *National Catholic Reporter* to expand on their view that Catholics are once again forced to choose between the Pope's morality of principle and Jesus' morality of love (see item in While We're At It). Or we could have asked Lutheran theologian Hans Philippi to expatiate on his complaint that "the encyclical says nothing useful to my daughter, to my homosexual friends, and to all those who simply wish to live as men and women without fear and without the obligation of applying abstract rules." Or Italian Protestant theologian Sergio Rostagno might have been asked to extend his insight that the Pope is responding to ethical problems "by reaffirming obedience to the norms dictated by his own church." Then there is Konrad Raiser, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, who says, "This text seems to want to close a debate which should have been opened together ecumenically." Would it be interesting to see what a document like *Veritatis Splendor* would look like had it been written jointly by the Pope and the World Council of Churches? No, probably not.

And that's the answer to our subscriber's inquiry. We didn't include "the other side" because, quite frankly, it has nothing to say at this point that is very interesting. The purpose of our symposium was to positively set out the teaching of the encyclical and explore some of its implications. Disagreement with the teaching, if disagreement there must be, should follow the sympathetic engagement of the teaching. We're so old-fashioned that we hold to what now sounds like the novel idea that people should, before dissenting, know what they are dissenting from. The conversation continues, and there will be ample time for airing divergent arguments, also in these pages. Meanwhile, we continue to think that *Veritatis Splendor* is one of the more splendid things that has happened for moral reflection in this generally unreflective century.

FT

The Communities Missing From "Communitarianism"

The communitarian movement has come in for a good deal of attention in the last few years. It is the baby of sociologist Amitai Etzioni, and its platform is at least a movement toward the side of the angels in our political and cultural wars. That is why this writer signed on to its original manifesto, although not without misgivings. Recently, Etzioni expanded the manifesto in the form of a book, *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda* (Crown). Joshua Abramowitz reviews the book in *The Public Interest* and, in our judgment, puts his finger on a serious, and potentially fatal, weakness in the communitarian vision: "Etzioni is mindful of two of the institutions that stand between the individual and the state—the family and the community. But that's it. He goes two for three. In other words, Etzioni's plans for a 'moral revival' pay almost no attention to religion. When religion does come up, it is often tied to intolerant excess—religious faith and authoritarian thuggery go hand in hand. Presumably, that's because religions threaten the communitarian agenda: they can be insular and socially inflexible, if not intolerant of some community norms."

For communitarianism to ignore religion is to ignore the largest associational (i.e., communitarian) pattern in American life. Religious differences can fragment a movement, to be sure, but a communitarianism that does not address how we should live with our deepest differences would be a pretty timorous and feeble thing. In addition, while it is understandable that the movement wants to avoid the fevered disagreements over questions such

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as abortion—disagreements that are often religiously grounded—a bolder communitarianism would welcome the opportunity to explore the possibilities of civil accommodation on the most controverted issues. In any event, Abramowitz is right: to speak of moral revival in America without reference to religion is like speaking of nutrition without reference to food, or of literacy without reference to books. Communitarianism will become more plausible and effective when it learns what Tocqueville meant when he said that "religion is the first political institution" of American democracy.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ The World Council of Churches has called for the lifting of sanctions against Serbia. Serbia is generally thought to be the chief aggressor in the former Yugoslavia, having seized the lion's share of the territory and perpetrated a great deal of bloody nastiness. The WCC has a long record of supporting sanctions as an alternative to military action. In South Africa, Iraq, Haiti, and elsewhere. The Catholics of Croatia are not represented in the WCC. The Muslims of Bosnia are not represented in the WCC. The Serbian Orthodox Church is a member of the WCC. WCC officials deny that that has anything to do with their call for lifting the sanctions against Serbia. Whether one believes that is an indicator of where one draws the line between charity and naivete.

■ Last year in this space we said, "When it works so well, do it again." We then announced the second annual seminar on "*Centesimus Annus* and the Free Society." Now we're announcing the third. This time it will be in Krakow, Poland, July 3 to 24. The faculty includes Michael Novak, George Weigel, James Nuechterlein, Russell Hittinger, and Richard John Neuhaus, plus distinguished Polish intellectuals and church leaders. Fellowships are available for ten American graduate students. Send curriculum vitae and 300-word essay on the meaning of liberty to Derek Cross, American Enterprise Institute, 1150 Seventeenth St., NW, Washington D.C. 20036. Application deadline is April 1, 1994.

■ As Bernard Nathanson forcefully argued in these pages (April 1992), C. Everett Koop, when he was Surgeon General, was a very doubtful friend of the pro-life movement. Now Koop is stumping the country for the Clinton health plan. *Christianity Today* caught up with him to ask his views on the state of the pro-life cause today. He opined that it is necessary to achieve some compromise. There is a difference, he said, "between ethical compromise and a political compromise." Fair enough. But then this: "Koop regards the *Roe* decision as a failed effort at conciliation: if pro-life advocates had allowed for abortion in cases of rape and incest rather than demanding a ban on all abortions, a sweeping court ruling such as *Roe* would have been avoided, or at least delayed. 'A compromise could have averted millions upon millions of abortions.' " Come again? In 1973, the year of *Roe*, there was no pro-life movement to speak of. There had been for several years an "abortion liberalization" movement that wanted to expand the circumstances in which babies could be legally terminated. By their own admission, the liberalizers were utterly surprised, and most of them were delighted, by the sweeping decision of the Court. Far from being interested in compromise, the Blackmun decision (reinforced by subsequent decisions) was a judicial diktat that removed the question of abortion from democratic deliberation and decision. Dr. Koop's revisionist history is bizarre. His blaming of pro-lifers for the thirty million abortions since *Roe* is unconscionable.

■ As we've said before, in the absence of a No Comment Department, we are reduced to noting items that would qualify if we had one. For example, this *National Catholic Reporter* editorial on the recent encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor:* "The Pope wants us all to live in the world of Truth. But life, alas, is not like that. We live in the penultimate world of muddle and confusion, with sparks of goodness occasionally lighting up the darkness. And, when all is said and done, the pilgrim Catholic, encyclical in hand, is left with a dilemma: Where is the love? This, no matter how one reads it, is a harsh, negative, rigid, authoritarian document. The Christian searches vainly for the positive, affirming, all-embracing, compassionate tone of the Christ in whose name the Pope wrote his encyclical; the Christ who said to prostitutes and tax collectors and other rejects to come along and follow him, who was anything but absolute, putting up instead an umbrella big enough for everyone, and suggesting by his wholesome attitude that he respected the intelligence and conscience God had given to people in the first place. It is said that, 2,000 years later, the Pope sees as the culmination of his pontificate the casting in cold concrete of the glad, liberating message of Jesus. One can't help feeling that one of them got it wrong." We do not have a No Comment Department because we cannot resist commenting. That Our Lord's "big umbrella" approach to evil reflects his "wholesome attitude" is really a nice thing to say about Him. All that stuff about taking up your cross and following Him notwithstanding, He's really a regular guy. You can leave the fear and trembling business to that rigorous old Polish Pope. "The Pope wants us to live in the world of Truth." Just imagine.

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■ It started out some years ago as a very interesting publication. The *National & International Religion Report (NIRR)* contained valuable information not readily available elsewhere. Under its new editorship, however, it has tended downhill. *NIRR* has become more and more a sheet of puffery for myriad Evangelical groups claiming spectacular "Gospel awakenings" in places as various as Peru, Romania, and Des Moines. If half the awakenings and spiritual breakthroughs reported by Evangelical enthusiasts were true, the world would have been evangelized a long time ago. More problematic is the casual equation of success—measured by alleged conversions and money raised—with divine blessing. The concluding item in the issue of *NIRR* at hand is this: " 'Whenever there were, like, two outs or two strikes or something, I'd ask God for help—and it worked,' Long Beach (Calif.) Little League All-Stars shortstop and pitcher Sean Burroughs told *NIRR*. Through the Western regionals and the World Series, Burroughs pitched twenty consecutive innings without allowing a hit. During the Series, he struck out thirty-two batters and got nine hits, including two home runs. Burroughs, thirteen years old, told his mother that when his team needs to rally, 'I've been asking God to give me something to hit. He hasn't let me down yet.' " Not yet. And what is young Burroughs to think when God doesn't come through for him? Perhaps this is not as gross as the *National Catholic Reporter*'s editorial commendation of Jesus for having a "wholesome attitude," but it's close. Given the fatuities peddled in the name of Christianity, one would prefer not to be a Christian, were it not true.

■ The cross is "in." Upmarket catalogues and fashion magazines are featuring designer crosses by the dozens. This from *Vogue:* "Both as streetwise pendants and as couture pieces, crosses have had a popular revival. . . . With medieval-inspired fashion making its mark, a cross worn at the neck or pinned to a jacket will continue to be the definitive accessory of the moment—whether a simple wooden piece by Tom Binns or Verdura's extravagant aquamarine-and-yellow-sapphire cross (designed by Fulco di Verdura in tandem with Salvador Dali in 1942)." How an instrument of torture and death became a fashion statement is worth pondering. One cannot imagine the same thing happening to gallows, electric chair, or guillotine. A friend says it's a backhanded compliment to Christianity, since Easter removed the horror of the cross. We don't think so. The resurrection defeated death; it did not trivialize it. So what is a woman to do who wants to wear a cross as a statement of faith? The best thing is probably to make it starkly simple and very small, and, if asked what it means, respond with John 3:16. Then wait until next season when *Vogue* and its ilk proclaim that something else is "in." Maybe images of starving children in aquamarine-and-yellow-sapphire.

■ The late Aaron Wildavsky reviews Myron Magnet's *The Dream and the Nightmare: The Sixties' Legacy to the Underclass* (Morrow). Writing in *The Public Interest,* Wildavsky concludes with this: "Several times Magnet rightly lets us know that the intersection of poverty and race is critical to understanding the American condition. When Gunnar Myrdal wrote decades ago about the American dilemma, he had something else in mind: Most Americans were agreed that the values of the established culture—equality under the law and equal opportunity—had been systematically violated for black citizens. The problem was how to act so as to realize values we held in common. Nowadays the new American dilemma is that Americans in positions of power believe that equal opportunity and equality under the law lack meaning unless they are accompanied by greater equality of condition. Nowadays—hence the confusion and consternation Magnet so ably reports—our dilemma is that we do not agree about what ought to constitute, to use the old phrase, the American way of life. It is not just the struggle for the soul of the underclass but for the soul of America, which we once called 'our' America, that is revealed in this immensely valuable book."

■ As noted here some while back, the question has again come up as to whether Church World Service (CWS), by far the largest part of the National Council of Churches (NCC), should split off from the council. Apparently the idea has been put on the back burner, again. Appointed as the new director of CWS is R. Lawrence Turnipseed, a United Methodist. NCC general secretary Joan Brown Campbell says, "Lonnie and I share a commitment to preserve the integrity of the council's work." We wish Lonnie Turnipseed well.

■ Another "Future of the American Church Conference" in Washington, D.C., has come and gone. Even the *National Catholic Reporter* admits that it looks more like the past than the future. The participants are increasingly broad of beam and grey of head. The conference used to attract 2,000 and more, but this year—even though the theme was the hot topic of culture and gender—"the 600 participants, mostly women religious, were white, mainly over fifty, and already well educated about church tensions." Key speakers such as Father Charles Curran, Anthony Padovano, and Rosemary Ruether "came under fire . . . as 'old warhorse theologians' who come back as repeats on the conference schedule year after year." Curiously, the report ends with the observation that "People are tired of this grim-faced patriarchal church of old men who hang on too long to office to fight for the church of yesterday with no thought, or little thought, that they're losing the church of tomorrow." Old men like John Paul II at the world

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youth gathering in Denver, presumably. There was, apparently, one innovation at the Washington conference. It seems a new translation of the Bible was introduced. The report says that Franciscan Sister Fran Feder spoke on Paul's letter to the Galatians, "which states there is no distinction between heterosexual and homosexual, cleric and lay, white and multicultural." Pray that the Future of the Church conference will rest in peace, as the rest of us move on to the future of the Church.

■ For reasons far from clear, Karen Armstrong's *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* garnered much acclaim when published in Britain (Knopf has just brought it out here). One can understand why the ostentatiously atheistic A. N. Wilson likes it. "This," he writes, "is the most fascinating and learned study of the biggest wild goose chase in history—the quest for God." But then Robert Runcie, former Archbishop of Canterbury, effuses, "She refreshes the understanding of what one knows, and provides a clear introduction to the unfamiliar." One is forced to wonder what it is that His Grace thinks he knows. Toward the end of this 460-page tome, Armstrong, a former nun, allows, "Some people still find it possible to find meaning in the idea of God." She mentions Karl Barth, perhaps the most influential theologian of this century, as an example. But of him she remarks, "It seems unhealthy to combine such radical skepticism in the powers of the intellect with such an uncritical acceptance of the truths of scripture." So there. We are rather sure that it is unhealthy, if that's the word, to expose oneself unduly to the feather-brained ideas of an ill-informed ex-believer whose grasp of theological thought is as feeble as her hold on English style ("find it possible to find meaning," "skepticism in the powers of the intellect"). Really, Runcie.

■ Lutheran Brotherhood, a fraternal insurance outfit, has this full-page ad in several Lutheran publications. The bold headline is "The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported our variable annuities are some of the best in the industry." Below that is a little cartoon fellow with a balloon that says, "Now that's what I call good news." As distinct from what Lutherans have usually insisted is the good news?

■ One need not agree with Fr. Raymond Schroth about the possibility of women priests in order to agree with his point about meddling with the Bible in order to achieve that and so many other fashionable ends. This from "Let's Go to the Text" in *America:* "A faculty friend told me the story of the nineteenth-century abolitionist preacher who took his scissors and clipped all the references to slavery out of his Bible, as if that would further the cause of racial justice. We can try the same tactic, and we'll end up with a wishy-washy religion that eliminates anything from the gospel message that makes us feel ill at ease, anything odd or foreign or difficult to understand. Since there is no sound scriptural argument against women's ordination, the Scripture, truly understood, must be the best weapon for the liberation of women and men alike. The danger is that by the year 2000 this kind of movement for 'equality' will have so unsexed the liberating power of the Gospels that we won't have women priests. We'll have the same old male priests who will stand at the altar, raise their hands, and intone: 'The Force be with you.'"

■ Writing on the death of approximately eighty-five Branch Davidians near Waco, Texas, Daniel Wattenberg notes that all that artillery was brought to bear before David Koresh and his followers were even charged with a crime. As for the ballyhoo about their being armed and dangerous: "Texas Rangers recovered about two hundred guns from the crime scene, roughly two per resident. Statewide in Texas, seventeen million people own sixty million guns, or about four per resident." In view of the egregiously self-serving whitewash coming out of Janet Reno's Justice Department, one expects that there will be further examinations of what happened at Waco, possibly the most direct and bloody assault on religion by government force in American history, or at least since Joseph Smith and his followers were killed in 1844. It is a subject that will receive further attention in the pages of this journal.

■ The University of Detroit Mercy is all in a stir over a book published by Jane Schaberg, until recently chairman of the religious studies department. Her book, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus* (HarperCollins, wouldn't you know), contends that Jesus was not conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary was raped by a man. Detroit Mercy, a Catholic school, has not been entirely supportive, Ms. Schaberg complains. She still has her job, she says, but "I didn't know the university was going to cave in like this." Reporter Robin Wilson continues: "She is reluctant to discuss her religious beliefs (she says she goes to church 'when I think I can handle my anger'). But she says it is important for feminist scholars to continue to address Catholic teachings. 'I believe that it's a very dangerous thing for women to simply opt out and say, "The male church can have the buildings, the institution, the money, the power, and we'll go somewhere else," she says. 'The Catholic Church is a living organism, and it's currently one of the most deadly to women.' " It puts one in mind of an admirably candid response by Rosemary Radford Ruether many years ago. Asked why—in view of all that she says she doesn't believe that the Church does believe and does believe that the Church doesn't believe—she still stays in the Church, Ms. Ruether answered, "That's where the xerox machines are." It makes sense, of a sort.

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■ ICEL (pronounced *eye*-sell) is the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, and it is in charge of liturgical texts for English-speaking churches around the world. A big issue, as you might imagine, is "inclusive" language. A reporter was asked to submit questions in writing to Dr. John Page, ICEL's executive secretary. Question: Are "man," "him," "his," and "he" inclusive of both sexes? Dr. Page's answer: "It is ICEL's position that those words are no longer generic terms inclusive of men as well as women. We would find sanction for this in various recent editions of standard English dictionaries, for example, the 1992 edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary* of the English Language where the first meaning under the entry 'man' is 'an adult male human being.' " Responding to Dr. Page, Fr. Joseph Fessio, publisher of the *Catholic World Report*, wrote: "Dictionaries of the English language (going back to Old English) have for centuries given as the first meaning for 'man' 'a member of the human race; a person' or the equivalent. By the principle you [Page] are using, the word 'man' would never have meant 'an adult male person' until recently. Or, to put it in the form you used: 'It is ICEL's position that prior to 1992 "man" was not a specific term excluding women and children. We would find sanction for this in all editions of standard English dictionaries prior to 1992 where the first meaning under the entry "man" is "a member of the human race." ' "

Fessio continued: "In fact, the dictionary you cite gives as the second of fourteen meanings of the entry 'man' (all still current) 'any human being as distinguished from an animal or deity; a member of the human race; a person,' and as the third meaning 'the human race; mankind.' Surely you don't think that because the second meaning replaced the first in one dictionary (most dictionaries retain the traditional order), the centuries-old generic meaning has vanished?" Giving an example of the wrongheadedness of Page's position, Fessio noted, "It's as if one said, 'The ICEL episcopal boardrooom is full of crooks,' explaining that the first meaning for that word in *The American Heritage Dictionary* is 'an implement or tool, such as a bishop's crosier . . . with a bent or crooked part.' " We do not know if Dr. Page has been heard from again.

■ No, of course we didn't go to the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago last summer. Some of the more mainstream Protestant and Catholic figures who gingerly hovered at its edges worried that big money behind sundry Asian and goddess groups might use the parliament to challenge more established interreligious enterprises. It seems unlikely. The parliament's manifesto, written by

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reliably dissident Catholic theologian Hans Küng, didn't mention God for fear of offending those whose theology takes them no further than "Ultimate Reality." The Orthodox churches, bad sports that they are, pulled out halfway through because of the systematic bashing of Christianity. But David Toolan of *America* stayed on. He says it was a "hoot," and Toolan knows a hoot when he sees one. Devotees of the Egyptian goddess Isis were so popular, he reports, that their ritual observances had to switch rooms three times in order to accommodate the crowds. Toolan continues: "One of the opportunities of a meeting like this is to suspend bias and stretch one's horizons. Dutifully, I went looking for Muslims who were willing to talk honestly about 'jihad.' Not much luck. I did better with benign witches. I went to hear Phyllis Currot, a New York attorney and president and high priestess of the largest Wicca organization, the Covenant of the Goddess. Ms. Currot's account of Western history was a bit crude, I found, but her theology (the 'indigenous religion of Europe,' she called it) sounded a good deal like Bernard of Clairvaux's nature mysticism and could have served as an introduction to a medieval vision of a sacramental universe. Her predictable enemy: an androcentric, patriarchal, and Cartesian Christianity that legitimizes ecological destruction. Chief Seattle, oracle of Pacific-Northwest Indians in the 1850s, you will not be surprised to hear, is a Wiccan hero. Nature, we were told, is an 'epiphany of God'—and for backup Ms. Currot cited Father Thomas Berry's *Dream of the Earth*. Nothing Satanic here, I thought, though on street corners outside the hotel the followers of the jailed Lyndon Larouche ('the nation's leading political prisoner,' they called him) were claiming that the whole conference agenda ('environmentalism, population control, and One Worldism') represented a New Age conspiracy and was the work of the Devil." Toolan may have a piece of a point, but Bernard of Clairvaux and the "medieval vision" did have a thing about Jesus Christ, Trinity, and so forth. As for the opinion of the execrable Lyndon Larouche, even a stopped clock is right sometime.

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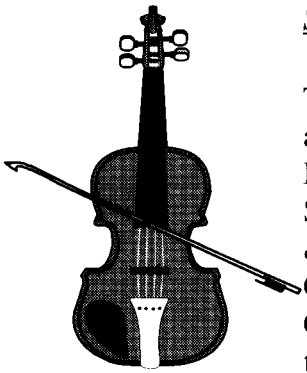

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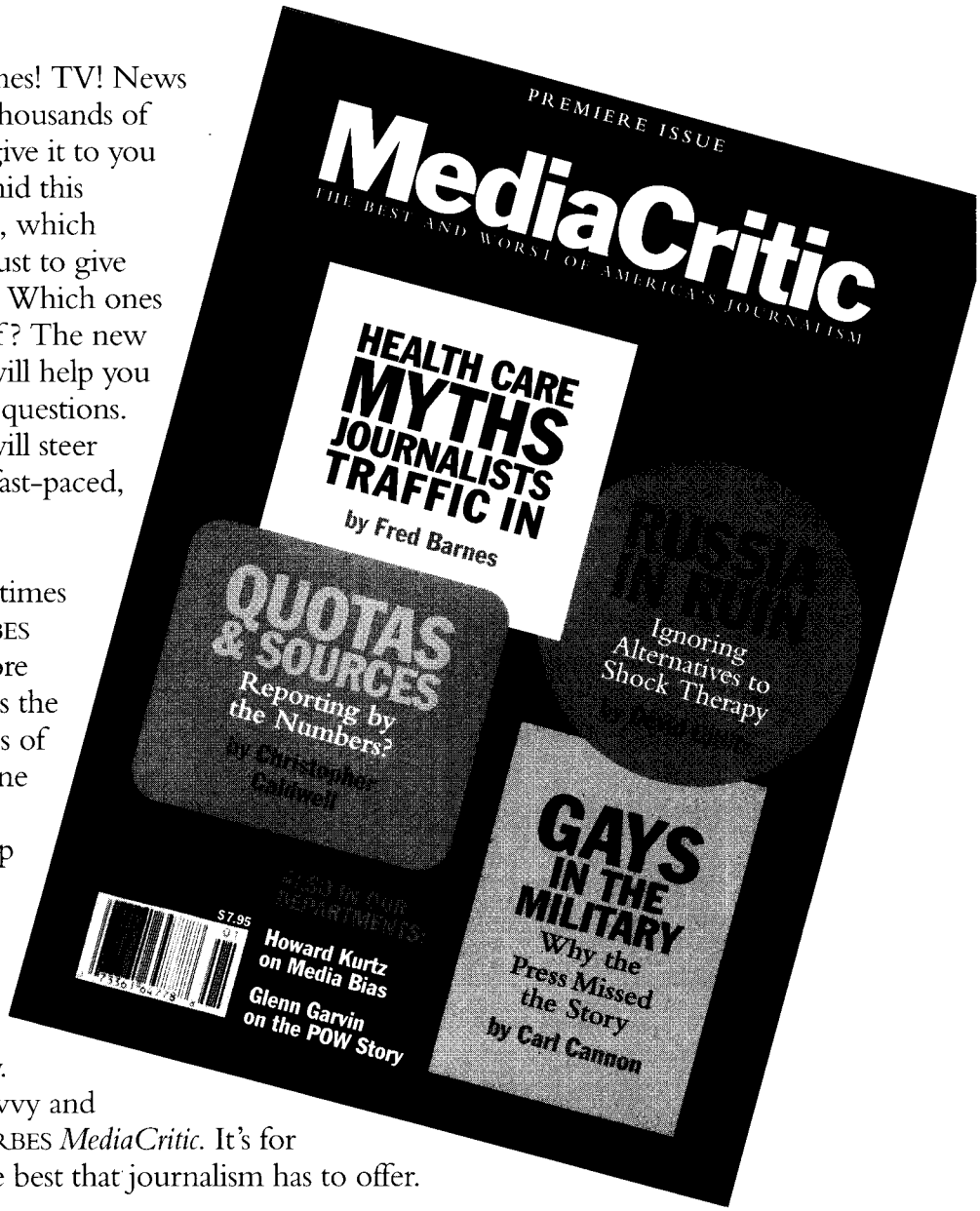

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